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ABSTRACT

A series of articles and essay reviews are represented on issues of concern in humanities education. First, Benjamin DeMott's "A Moral Argument for the Humanities" asserts that humanities instruction should stress certain moral questions, such as the connection of moral life with civilization, individual responsibility, and institutions. Next, "Critical Skills: The Humanities as an Enabling Curriculum," by James A. Schulz, argues that humanities education provides critical skills that permit students to advance in other academic and technical areas. J. Anthony Blair's "Teaching Argument in Critical Thinking" assesses the role of critical thinking courses with particular reference to their place in teaching students claim analysis, argument analysis, and argument construction. Next, "Greece and Rome: Outdate or Update?" by Mark Morford supports the study of ancient Greece and Rome in the information age. "The Case for Nursing Ethics," by Tziporah Kasachkoff, advocates courses which illuminate problematic issues in health care and questions of moral responsibility as part of the nursing curriculum. "The Place of Literature in the Curriculum: 1984 and After," by Charles Moran; "Education in America: Changing Times and New Beginnings," by Myron Marty; and "College Teaching and the Question of Commitment," by Robert Lawrence review recent monographs. Finally, Susan Resneck Parr highlights new National Endowment for the Humanities programs. (HB)

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A Moral Argument for the Humanities

Benjamin DeMott

The subject — "the moral argument for humanities" — engenders expectations of highmindedness and solemnity. Naturally I would like to moderate both with a reassuringly lighthearted anecdote. But beginning that way creates a problem of tone too difficult for me to solve, and I have therefore decided against it. As it happens, I have something to say that's entirely serious and strongly felt, and the message is of a sort easily capsized and sunk by humor. The message is this: I am grateful to have been invited to give my views on the subject in question. We are men and women who take pride in our work and in our performance. When we agree to listen to one of our number who enters the classroom and leaves it by the same door used by other mortals — when we agree to listen to this person speak not on an area of unique expertise but rather about matters we ourselves know well, from inside, we pay that person genuine honor.

To the subject before us: As we all are aware, the moral argument for the study of the humanities once focused on wisdom and character. And many of us were taught quite early in our professional careers to roll our eyes in irony at both terms when mention of them was made in relation to teaching. *I'm a professor, not a preacher,* so ran our line of rumination. *I am a scholar, not a moral guide. Above all, I am not a fool. Was not Matthew Arnold a fool when he reviled the hateful workers who dared to protest their starvation in the neighborhood of Victoria's house? Is it not clear that* his *Sweetness and Light* — his *worship of "the classics" and "the touchstones"—was a species of social obliviousness, patriarchal fatuity and moral blindness? Spare me that. Allow me one Bronx cheer for wisdom and character.*

Lately, however, more than a few leading academicians have undertaken a search for means, if not exactly of restoring respectability to the use of the words "wisdom" and "character" in discourse on teaching, at least of making the teaching profession more conscious of the dangers of treating such terms as obscenities. Last year, for instance, Professor Walter Bate of Harvard reminded an audience of the bond between "human letters" and "that mysterious, all-

Benjamin DeMott is professor of English, Amherst College (MA). *This article was presented originally as an address at the annual meeting of the Community College Humanities Association, Eastern Division, Hartford, November 4, 1983.*

important thing called character," and regretted that, owing to the combination of willful egotism (rooted in the Romantic Movement) and science-envy, the bond had been severed. This past spring Professor Robert Bellah of Stanford warned against "modern individualist ideologies"—those modes of thought that arose in the West in the 17th and 18th centuries, and, displacing "the humanities" and dominating the world of Western thought ever since, created a culture in which "social vision" is nearly impossible. Professor Bate's advice to those who want to stem the tide of moral unconcern in the colleges and universities is to deny tenure to literary theorists and return to non-esoteric study of the classics: "The subject matter—the world's great literature—is unrivaled," Bate declared. "All we need is the chance and the imagination to help it work upon the minds and characters of the millions of students to whom we are responsible. Ask that the people you are now breeding up in departments, and to whom you now give tenure appointments, be capable of this."

Professor Bellah was less optimistic. Addressing the very sentences of Professor Bate's that I've just quoted, he asked whether it is "so clear that 'the world's great literature' (no longer the Greek and Latin classics), even well taught, produces anything we would really recognize as wisdom or character?" In Bellah's opinion, the only way to renew the links between "the humanities," "wisdom and character," and the general life of the culture is by adopting a more realistic view of the age itself—confronting the entire panoply of forces that has destroyed the idea of the normative in modern life. Bellah called for "the revival of tradition," and presented himself as an academician wondering where in higher education "that revival might take root." His key recommendation was that "For those who still view the humanities as having something to do with the 'accession of wisdom' or 'the formation of character,' I think it is time to make common cause with Divinity. Divinity has finally become part of the humanities in most campuses in the form of 'religious studies'."

We'll return in a bit to Bate and Bellah, with whom I have points both of agreement and of difference. What matters at present is simply that their voices testify, as I said, that the issue of the humanities in relation to the conduct of life retains some capacity to interest first-rate minds. And of course the terms of the charge that your chairman, Donald Schmeltekopf, laid down to me constitute further evidence telling in the same direction. "What we believe needs stressing now," Don said in a letter I have his permission to quote, "is a more comprehensive and in-depth view of the notion that, at bottom some place, the teaching of the humanities ought to have as one of its major purposes certain characteristic moral benefits. Obviously we are not thinking about Sunday-School moral benefits. We have in mind, on a grand scale, such matters as the connection between moral life and civilization, moral life and individual responsibility, and moral life and institutions. What we would like for you to do is

to 'puzzle' through these issues from the perspective of your discipline and work. How might the case be made that teaching the humanities should have moral benefits within a pluralistic society? How, from the perspective of a scholar and critic, might one actually do this kind of teaching in such a way that it is not reduced to moralizing and indoctrination?"

These far from trivial questions have obvious bearings on the Bate-Bellah dialogue. They are remote from the issues choking public discussion of education at present—remote from merit pay, the future of the graduate schools of education, the problem of a nation at risk because of sinking literacy standards, and so on. And I shall add that merely by the act of addressing such questions we don't instantly refashion our own being or transcend the modernist temper. We remain what we were—children of Marx, Freud, Nietzsche, and Wittgenstein, the great strippers-away, people happiest, as Wittgenstein said in his lecture on aesthetics, with the kind of explanation that says, "This is really only this." But for a brief interval we can suspend our modernism. For a moment we can face up to the impatience many of us must feel with the academic culture of discount and disdain—the culture of reductive disciplines and specialties. What we need to help us is a sense, as Schmeltekopf states, both of a method and a goal, a way of speaking without flatulence or sentimentality or cheap inspirationalism about the moral benefits that conceivably flow from our teaching.

In my own teaching life—my own small world of classroom methods and goals—the most strengthening remark that I know of—pithy and ponderable—was made by the historian R. H. Tawney: "Sympathy is a form of knowledge." It is a memorable remark both because of what it affirms and of what it refuses to affirm. Tawney does not say that sympathy in itself is a form of goodness, he does not say that knowledge in itself is a good; he says only that "sympathy is a form of knowledge." We do not reach conduct from this remark, but, on the other hand, we are reminded, by it, that the condition called sympathy involves knowing, hence has a component that could be perceived as in some sense intellectual; and we are reminded, further, that knowing and caring are in a measure interdependent; and we can conclude with only a very slight enlargement of Tawney's theme that feeling from within is inseparable from, engrained in, every genuine act of comprehension.

I believe I can say without falsehood that most of what I do in my classroom is responsive to Tawney's theme, and, further, that this responsiveness in no way entails introducing my students to a systematic ethics of personal relationships, or to any constraining, non-pluralistic hierarchies of virtue and vice. The work I engage in from hour to hour is that of aiding the development of

the resource upon which depends the form of knowledge Tawney seeks to cultivate. As a teacher of literature I try to improve the performance of my students as imaginers and summoners of the content and quality of experience not their own. A portion of my effort goes to refining the capacity to summon moments of feeling; a portion goes to the refining of understanding of what is uniquely individual in the imagined life; a portion goes to refining the adjudicating power—the ability, that is, to balance the claims of competing or conflicting individual perspectives or points of view.

A significant assumption behind all this is that moral life, in its deep substance, depends upon the imagination—upon our gift as summoners. (Do unto others as your imagination advises that you would have them do unto you.) I am nourished in my "faith" by a wide range of thinkers. By the Wallace Stevens who knew that the world unimagined does not exist. By the Emerson who asserted that: "We animate what we see, we see only what we animate." By the Rilke who pressed the argument that "there is scarcely anything more difficult than to love one another; that it is work, day labor—*day labor*—God knows there is no other word for it." The fundamental convictions are, first, that just action is partly a function of knowledge—knowledge of the kind produced by the mentally disciplined sympathy that is rightly described as the constructive imagination; and, second; that the use of the work of art as an arena for the exercise of the imagination responds both to the claims of the work of art as a thing in itself *and* to our aspiration for guidance about how to live life on earth.

Pitiably abstract? Yes, indeed. I assure you that I do not set forth or explicate, in the classroom, a pedagogical philosophy. I teach. I turn to a text, as sooner or later we all must, and I encourage my students to work with me at the task of summoning the interiors of the life before us, interrogating moments in the text in full knowledge that, absent our interrogation, no moment exists, no text, no interior, no life. I turn, let us say, to Thomas Hardy's poem "The Slow Nature," and I ask that you do that now, with me—launch upon the time-honored, wholly conventional work of looking at words on a page. Because if we don't do that together, then the whole enterprise of asking ourselves to puzzle through the connection between moral life and the humanities becomes merely another waffle or scam.

THE SLOW NATURE

(An incident of Froon Valley)

"Thy husband—poor, poor Heart!—is dead—
Dead, out by Moreford Rise;
A bull escaped the barton-shed,
Gored him, and there he lies!"

—"Ha, ha—go away! 'Tis a tale, methink,
Thou joker Kit!" laughed she.
"I've known thee many a year, Kit Twink,
And ever hast thou fooled me!"

—"But, Mistress Damon—I can swear
Thy goodman John is dead!
And soon th'lt hear their feet who bear
His body to his bed."

So unwontedly sad was the merry man's face—
That face which had long deceived—
That she gazed and gazed; and then could trace
The truth there; and she believed.

She laid a hand on the dresser-ledge,
And scanned far Egdon-side;
And stood; and you heard the wind-swept sedge
And the rippling Froon; till she cried:

"O my chamber's untidied, unmade my bed,
Though the day has begun to wear;
'What a slovenly hussif!' it will be said,
When they all go up my stair!"

She disappeared; and the joker stood
Depressed by his neighbour's doom,
And amazed that a wife struck to widowhood
Thought first of her unkempt room.

But a fortnight thence she could take no food,
And she pined in a slow decay;
While Kit soon lost his mournful mood
And laughed in his ancient way.

—Thomas Hardy

What is going on here? What is taking place within another human creature? What is going on within Mistress Damon in lines 17-20? It is not practicable here today to "teach the class," but let us at least move through the lines together toward an imagining. Mistress Damon's husband has been killed in an accident. At first she thinks the report of his death is some kind of joke, but at length she's convinced otherwise—by the sad expression of the man who brings the news, together, perhaps, with the detail about people carrying her husband's body to be laid out in his bed upstairs. On its face it would seem that

the only possible answer to the question about what is going on in lines 17-20 is that Mistress Damon is taking in the truth that her husband is gone. Often my students say of Mistress Damon that "she's in shock;" always we seek to advance beyond that formulation.

For there's reason to believe that that answer at once tells us too much and too little. The next few lines of the poem (lines 21-24) raise doubt that "the truth" has been digested in any genuine sense. Mistress Damon responds to the news of her husband's accident by worrying about what the sight of her untidy upstairs will cause her neighbors to say about her as a housekeeper. Nor can we explain that response by proposing that her feeling for her mate doesn't run deep. The closing stanza of "The Slow Nature" reveals that a fortnight after the death Mistress Damon was too griefstruck to eat, and that thereafter she "pined in a slow decay . . ." A way of stating the problem is that, while we know, in theory, the kinds of feelings that seem appropriate to such a moment as the one described in lines 17-20, we haven't much reason for believing that Mistress Damon is experiencing such feelings.

Back to the question, then: what is going on in lines 17-20? If we are to imagine this moment fully, what must we bring to life?

An answer is: we must bring to life a person *almost* trapped at the brink of the unthinkable and the unknowable, a person barely bringing off an escape from an abyss. The poor countrywoman—a simple and unsophisticated nature—is asked to take in an event whose meanings and consequences are beyond her capacity to fathom. The magnitude of the loss, the immensity of the change of circumstance that's imminent for her, the absence of the lifetime companion of one's meals and evenings—the person whose weight may still be seen in the wrinkles and folds of a chair cushion—the stilling of a voice more familiar than one's own: Mistress Damon's consciousness moves for instants in any or in all these directions, but finds no release, no way to breathe.

And then suddenly there's an opening toward which she flees under pressure of panic or terror. But now her panic isn't a response to the unthinkable or unknowable or unbearable. It's a response to people who will badmouth her as a slob. The inexpressible anguish of loss is re-made in the space of these few lines into a far more concrete anxiety about being thought of as "slovenly." An unendurable fear—a fear that simply paralyzes, renders one incapable of thought or action—is replaced by a fear that can be coped with by acting, working, cleaning, neatening. That brief passage of time is best brought to life as a movement from helplessness to release from helplessness—the release that other bereaved human creatures have found, time and again in life, in the complicated ritual and errands of "funeral arrangements." The mind that finds such release probably cannot realize the brevity of the comfort, can't begin to

acknowledge that the loss, now mere words rather than a sense of emptiness renewed each day, a puzzling feeling of incompleteness, weighty and depressing, must soon enough be felt in all these ways. One might even venture, in bringing this moment to life, to imagine that some quiver of thankfulness comes into being for a second—gratitude for a way of escaping from greater to lesser panic, "happiness" that some clear hard immediate tangible task exists into which to plunge one's thoughts and energies.

The poet doesn't tell us any of this explicitly. He shows us only an "amazed" onlooker, a person who can't for the life of him understand why a wife "struck to widowhood / Thought first of her unkempt room." But the assumption is that we, as active readers, collaborators in the creation of the experience of the poem, will move beyond "amazement" to the construction of the insides of Mistress Damon's feelings. We'll join with the poet, in short, in knowing from within.

A simple example. How can I speak of moral benefit in relation to this? I would argue that it is helpful to the development of the imagination to pursue the question of what is taking place in an uneducated mind at a moment of great stress; that it is helpful to the development of the imagination to move beyond cant phrases such as "she's in shock" to a consideration of the possible content of shock; that it is helpful to the development of the imagination to be pressed to inquire into such matters as comparative imaginative agility—the difference between the ease with which the unthinkable and absent is brought to the average mind in a media culture, and the difficulty of thinking the unthinkable in a culture wherein institutions are not perpetually confronting the mind with islands afire in the Pacific, say, or births and deaths of pandas, or name the exhibit of your choice.

None of us can produce evidence that such teaching leads to right conduct. Clarity about the absolute separateness of the solitudes that border our own solitude may or may not humble our generalizing pride. I can state that at those moments of my life when I have not behaved shamefully, when I have managed to rise to some challenge or other, it has been because the imagination was working, presenting me with a vivid knowledge of pain or need or suffering, prodding me to employ my powers of construction. But the step to action is all mystery. I believe it is a mistake on Professor Bate's part to speak as though any sort of non-esoteric study of the masterpieces will improve one's character; diddling and posturing were common in the teaching of literature before the theorists came to town and will certainly survive them. We need to be clearer and sharper in our account of an intelligent focus for humanities teaching than I find Professor Bate to be. I believe it's a mistake, too, for Professor Bellah to move too quickly to global issues: the need to enter combat against rampant

rationalism, obsessive individualism, remorseless objectification, and so on. An agenda that huge defeats the ambition even of the very young, and I am scarcely young.

But implicit in these criticisms of Bate and Bellah is no thought that the road to action is entirely clear to me. I am convinced that moral challenge in most lives tends to be particular, situational, molecular. I am also convinced that—saying it once more—one's chance of achieving a certain height in meeting such challenge is improved if, at the moment of challenge one knows how to imagine, how to construct a situation and an interiority as it exists for another, how to work seriously and patiently inward. My golden text on moral action both in personal and political life I find in Peguy: "The longer I live, citizen, the less I believe in the efficiency of sudden illuminations that are not accompanied by serious work, the less I believe in the efficiency of conversion, extraordinary, sudden and marvelous, in the efficiency of sudden passions, and the more I believe in the efficiency of modest, slow, molecular, definite work. The longer I live the less I believe in the efficiency of an extraordinary sudden social revolution, improvised, marvelous, with or without guns and impersonal dictatorship—and the more I believe in the efficiency of modest, slow, molecular, definitive work."

I believe that the training of the imagination does indeed qualify as "modest, slow, molecular, definitive work," and that in the longest run—a far longer course than any of our legs can cover—this work has good consequences. We are in great company when we do this work—the company of Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Hardy, Turgenev, Breughel among a hundred who might be named. What we have of fraternity, what we have of hope is owed in significant part to them; what the future will have of both depends in significant part on the use that's made of the imagination that they and their kind helped to bring to birth.

Critical Skills: The Humanities as an Enabling Curriculum

James A. Schulz

For teachers of the humanities, and especially for those of us teaching in this country's community colleges, these are not the best of times. The operating budgets of our various departments have been reduced and then reduced again; we have lost large chunks of curriculum territory to our colleagues teaching technical and vocational courses; and our credibility with our students has declined to the point that many of them now view our courses as distractions from the serious business of career education.

Nevertheless, when we are challenged to defend our efforts and ideals, we still tend to respond by saying that the humanities do not need any defending. Philosophy, literature, history, the study of foreign languages and cultures, the appreciation of music, dance, theatre, and the visual arts — these things, we say, are good in themselves, and there is no need to ask (or to explain) what, if anything, they might be good for.

This line of argument is a venerable one, and it is perfectly adequate so long as our challenger is someone who is already familiar with the contents of the humanistic tradition. It is useless, however, when we are arguing with "professional" administrators or undergraduate business majors, for uninitiated ears are entirely deaf to it. Yet even before these unsympathetic audiences we continue to claim that the value of humanistic study is self-evident.

This same lack of persuasion is evident when we endorse the familiar claim that humanities courses "enrich" the curriculum (by virtue of the intrinsic value of their subject matter). Not only is this line unconvincing to those who need most to be convinced, but it invites those of our administrators whose highest priorities are the principles of cost accounting to observe that what is enriching is, by definition, what is *not* necessary for survival. Given that much, there is little to prevent them from leaping to the appalling conclusion that although the promotion of functional literacy must certainly be counted among the legitimate goals of our institutions, the study of literature is a luxury that we and our students will have to forego — at least during this current period of austerity.

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But this is dangerous nonsense. Literacy and literature are correlative terms, and if we accept a standard that requires students only to learn how to read traffic violation citations and the instructions on frozen-food packages, then we tacitly agree to let those items count as the literature of the culture which we, as teachers, are propagating. This is not to say that the standard of functional literacy should be despised altogether. It is at least a step in the right direction. But unless we remind ourselves that it stands to the real thing roughly as house painting stands to the decoration of the Sistine ceiling, we will find that, like the bad currency in Gresham's Law, it has driven the higher standard from the market.

If we hope to avoid this sort of disaster, we must find a way to demonstrate, even to our antagonists, that real literacy is worth the effort. We must, that is, find a way to show that the disciplines of the humanities are more than high-class entertainments. We must show that the sort of thing one learns in studying the humanities is something that is crucial to the success of any significant human undertaking, and that, in this sense, the humanities do constitute a truly enabling curriculum.

It is not easy, however, to specify just what makes the difference between functional literacy and the real thing. We have a kind of an instinct that it is in and through their humanities courses that students achieve real literacy (if they ever do achieve it), and because it is usual to think of the humanities in terms of subject matter, some people argue that all that is needed to effect the transition in question is the experience one acquires by reading some (significant number of) literary works. From this point of view, the teacher's job (once functional literacy has been achieved) is merely to point students toward the right books, and then motivate them to actually read. These are not trivial or unworthy tasks, but neither are they the only things a teacher might try to do in this connection. These days, many of those who believe that teachers can and should play a more active role here are involved in the rapidly growing movement to design and develop "critical thinking" courses. This project has, unfortunately, proved to be an extremely frustrating one, and there is, so far at least, no real consensus about what should be taught in such classes.

It is worth noting, however, that here again everyone agrees that critical thinking courses of whatever stripe fall within the province of the humanities. This is a clear, albeit tacit, recognition of the fact that humanistic study has a technical side, and that we can plausibly talk about the "skills" of the humanities. In my view this is an important point, for it seems to me that the trouble with critical thinking courses is that they concentrate all their attention on the skills of analytical reflection. No doubt, these skills are among the most important of those the humanities teach, but I believe that there would be much to be gained by working out courses that teach *the whole range of skills* relevant to

humanistic study. The skills I am referring to here are simply the various traditional skills of criticism. Some of these skills have straightforward application to two or more of the disciplines of the humanities. Thus, for instance, the recognition and appreciation of ambiguity and the sensitive discrimination of nuance and detail are skills that are crucial to almost all work in the humanities. In other cases the interdisciplinary application of these skills is less obvious, and some of them are so highly specialized that they are only applicable within the discipline in which they were developed. There is no exhaustive list of them which would find universal acceptance by all interested parties, but it is clear, at least, that they involve things like perception and imagination which are not usually included under the category of "thinking."

Recognition of the existence of this body of critical skills (as I shall call them) is advantageous in that it allows us to speculate that at least some of these skills might have applications beyond their obvious use in connection with the various works of the humanistic tradition. If the "extra-curricular" application of these critical skills could be demonstrated, then we would be in a position to make a case for the *instrumental value* of humanistic study. I believe that such a case can be made, and that it can be shown in a very general way that the kinds of skills one learns in studying the humanities are critical to the success of any significant human undertaking. It is in this sense, I suggest, that the humanities curriculum can be considered a truly enabling one.

* * * *

In order to make this argument, I must begin with an unlikely sort of a digression. There is a piece of mathematical jargon which has, over the last decade or so, gained some considerable currency, and it will, I think, be a part of our common speech before too long. The term in question is "algorithm." (The sense in which this term is used today is new enough that it is not listed in the 1971 edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary* though it does appear, plausibly defined, in the 1975 edition of the *New Columbia Encyclopedia*.) An algorithm is a kind of step-by-step procedure for the accomplishment of a specified goal. What is special about an algorithm is that each of the steps in the procedure must be explicitly and unequivocally specified, and each must be realizable in a direct and straightforward manner.

The sudden currency this term has achieved derives from the fact that most if not all computer programs are algorithmic in character.[1] It should not be thought, however, that the notion of an algorithm is of use or interest only to those fluent in FORTRAN or BASIC. It is, on the contrary, a perfectly practical sort of a word, and it has myriad common applications. The aforementioned instructions on frozen-food packages have something of the flavor of an algorithm to them. The directions that the Internal Revenue Service sends along with our tax forms aspire (but miserably fail to achieve) algorithmic status.

Algorithms also have obvious application to game-playing. Any "system" or sure-win strategy for a game is almost certain to have the structure of an algorithm. Sometimes these game-playing algorithms are specious (as when someone claims to have a "system" for roulette) and sometimes they are perfectly legitimate. There is, for instance, an algorithm (which children regularly discover for themselves) for the game of tic-tac-toe. This algorithm guarantees at least a tie for anyone using it. It is worth noting, however, that using this algorithm takes all the fun out of the game.

In technical discussions of artificial intelligence, algorithms are sometimes contrasted with heuristics, where an heuristic is defined as a set of perfectly explicit and univocal instructions for the *approximation* of a specified goal.[2] In this sense, "Never try to fill an inside straight" would count as an example of a fairly well established heuristic for playing winning poker. For my purposes, however, the thing that is significant about algorithms and heuristics is not the difference between them, but the important way in which they are similar in that the instructions they comprise must always be so precise and unproblematic as to allow one to follow them without any need for debate, or reflection, or arbitrary and anxious choice. What is important, then, about algorithmic and heuristic procedures is their "blind," or "automatic," or uncritical character. This is, of course, precisely what makes them useful where computers are concerned, and it goes a good way toward explaining why using an algorithm takes all the fun out of things.

The automatic character of algorithms also reveals another important fact about them: that they cannot be counted among the tools of the understanding. All one has to do to use an algorithm is to follow the instructions (the orders!) of which it consists. One may follow these instructions as obliviously as one likes, for no understanding of either the task at hand or the logic of the algorithm is required for its successful application. Furthermore, there is no guarantee that the repeated use of an algorithm will ever engender any understanding of the task at hand. Anyone can tune in a television program, but few of us have even the remotest idea what we are actually doing when we perform this operation. And the same thing may be said, even more tellingly, of our use (medical and otherwise) of drugs. Indeed, our only access to most of the technology that informs our world is *via* algorithms of one sort or another. This is a sobering thought, or it should be.

Even if algorithms are not, in themselves at least, tools of the understanding, they are still powerful tools, and considerable advantage accrues to us when we make use of them. And, of course, the astonishing power of computers arises from the fact that they can rigorously employ algorithms that are vastly more extended and more complicated than any that a human being could manage even to memorize, much less work with. The occasional and astonishing

"stupidity" of these machines arises from the fact that not all tasks are perfectly susceptible to algorithmic analysis. A computer, which has no resources beyond its (algorithmic) program, is utterly nonplussed by such a problem, and we would be no better off if our intelligence were thoroughly algorithmic in character. Happily, it is not.

This last point is disputed by many of the proponents of artificial intelligence. They claim that while there are very many tasks for which we do not *yet* have algorithms, there is no function of intelligence which could not ultimately be captured in an algorithmic computer program.

What these people are denying is the validity of the distinction between judgment and calculation. The rules of arithmetical calculation are some of the algorithms most familiar to us, and most of us understand very little about what we are doing when we use these rules. We simply follow the algorithms we were taught in school and trust that we will get the right answer. Now computers are magnificent calculators; this is a point that nobody disputes. But calculation is simply not the whole truth about human intelligence.[3] There are some decisions we make and act upon with care and deliberation, but without reliance upon perfectly explicit rules and principles. I should like to categorize these decisions as "judgments." In other words, judgments are analgorithmic decisions. In the sense of the term I have specified, computers cannot make judgments at all. What is claimed, then, by the proponents of artificial intelligence whom I mentioned earlier is that judgment plays no necessary part in the life of intelligence.

The terms "criticism" and "judgment" are closely related, and it seems to me that the faculty of judgment is essential to any plausible understanding of the critical enterprise. In fact, I would go so far as to say that the notion of a purely algorithmic system of criticism is a ridiculous one — just as ridiculous, in fact, as is the parallel notion of a purely algorithmic creative procedure.

I should point out here that when I say criticism must necessarily be analgorithmic in character I am not saying that an algorithm might not be found for any specific school of criticism or style of creative work. However, should this sort of thing occur, we would quite naturally lose interest in these newly "automated" enterprises and set about inventing new ones to take their places (just as we moved from tic-tac-toe to other games when we learned the algorithm I mentioned earlier). What is ridiculous is the suggestion that the whole task of criticism or the whole of the creative process (or, for that matter, the whole business of game playing) might ever be "automated" in the manner I have described.

The reason for this may be seen most easily if we consider that the most obvious and most important of all analgorithmic contexts is the business of

making value judgments. If we attempt to imagine that an algorithm might be discovered which would guarantee that we would always make correct and proper value judgments in any context whatsoever, we encounter a prospect for which "horrific" is perhaps a better term than "ridiculous." Consider, for instance, how life would have been diminished if Bentham had succeeded in producing an (algorithmic) ethical calculus as unarguable and as efficacious as the mathematical one that Newton and Leibniz produced. With the business of deciding the difference between right and wrong thus automated, we would have no choice but to see ourselves reduced to the status of mere pawns or puppets in some game being played out by God or Nature or Chance. Our instinct and conviction that the business of making value judgments will never prove susceptible to algorithmic analysis is essential to our sense of self-respect. It is the single act of faith that grounds all work in the humanities. And, of course, since the making of value judgments lies at the very heart of all critical and creative practice, we can plausibly say that the development of this analgorithmic faculty of judgment (i.e., the teaching of critical skills) belongs to the final purpose of the humanities curriculum.

It is now easy to reach the conclusion we have been working toward up to this point, for the analgorithmic faculty of judgment is important to many contexts besides those in which our primary concern is the study of the humanities. The most obvious example I can cite here is our ability to comprehend and cooperate with other people. Certainly, this is a skill in which the effort of judgment is very often required. And, just as certainly, no algorithm will ever be found to "automate" this effort.

There is, however, a less obvious, and therefore perhaps more powerful, example of the "extra-curricular" application of the analgorithmic faculty of judgment that I might cite here. In every sort of work, men and women are regularly called upon to make decisions and act in situations for which no algorithm is available. This is not a problem which might be eradicated by better management, for there is a certain ambiguity, a certain open-endedness in any real world activity. One might, for instance, give perfectly complete and explicit instructions for the operation of a certain machine, but one cannot spell out in advance *all* the ways in which that machine might malfunction. Workers who are incapable of judging when a machine or a tool is not functioning properly are likely to damage the equipment, and they stand a good chance of endangering themselves and their co-workers. It is generally recognized in the workplace that no amount of additional technical training can solve this problem, and in the past employers have simply trusted that workers would develop judgment "naturally." This trust was not entirely naive, for the sort of judgment we are talking about here is roughly what Aristotle called "practical wisdom," and this, he maintained, is acquired through and only through experience. These days,

however, employers more and more frequently complain that the new (i.e., younger) workers they hire are dull and inflexible, and apparently unable readily to learn from experience.

I believe that the root of this problem lies in the fact that the humanities have been displaced from their traditionally central position in the curriculum just at the moment when vocational and technical education has abandoned its traditional interest in developing the faculty of judgment. As the content of technical-vocational courses has shifted over the years from manual crafts to today's more "automatic" techniques, something important has been lost. Real judgment was required in the development of traditional crafts, and this was generally recognized in talk about the need to develop an "eye" or a "feel" for the work. But few of today's jobs require skillful manipulation. One needs only to know how to push a button or turn a dial or throw a switch at the appropriate moment. Thus the sort of training one gets these days in technical-vocational courses is largely algorithmic in character, and, I suggest, when this sort of training dominates one's schooling (i.e., when one does little or no work in the humanities), the result is the sort of dullness and inflexibility of which employers are complaining. We can validly claim, then, that the study of the humanities is directly and concretely valuable for the "career oriented" students who make up the greater part of the student body of this country's community colleges, and that the humanities should, therefore, be restored to their traditionally central place in the curriculum.[2]

This defense of the humanities in terms of their instrumental value does not compromise our traditional claim for the intrinsic value of the disciplines we teach. The skills of the humanities are not reduced when they are applied in "extra-curricular" contexts. On the contrary, if we can, in the manner I have described, "humanize" the attitudes which our students bring to their work worlds, we will have done them and ourselves a great service, for in the end, what troubles me most about the students I teach is the pathetic nihilism which passes for sophistication among them. They are all too willing to declare that everything, including themselves and their lives, has a price and may legitimately be exchanged for anything else so long as a profit is made on the deal. I cannot imagine anything that could have greater instrumental value for them than an encounter with the intrinsic values of the contents of the humanistic tradition.

Notes

[1]There is some debate about whether *all* computer programs must be algorithmic. See: Brian Hayes, "Computer Recreations," in *Scientific American*, October 1983, 22-36.

[2]For more on the distinction between algorithms and heuristics (as the computer people understand it), see: Avron Barr and Edward A. Feigenbaum, *The Handbook of Artificial Intelligence* (Stanford: Houristech Press, 1981), I, 29.

[3]Perhaps the only unequivocal result of the various attempts to develop a computer program to play serious chess is our recognition that we do not really have any clear idea of how human players (at the expert level) arrive at their moves. All we do know is that their methods are nothing like the algorithms which machines must (for now, at least) use. See, for instance: Peter W. Frey, ed., *Chess Skill in Man and Machine*, 2nd ed. (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1983).

[4]I should like to note that it is the *traditional* humanities curriculum that I am defending here. While I have no real objection to special courses tailored to meet the interests of specific student audiences, it does seem to me wrong-headed to list, say, Ethics in Business and Ethics in Nursing when the course schedule does not include Introduction to Philosophy.

Teaching Argument in Critical Thinking

J. Anthony Blair

I

During the autumn of 1983 the Community College Humanities Association organized a set of workshops on teaching critical thinking, one in Hartford, one in St. Louis, and one in San Francisco.[1] CCHA hoped for 50 or 60 registrants at each workshop, but close to twice that number of people applied for each workshop, and some discipline areas were so heavily subscribed that people had to be turned away. This is one of several current indications that "critical thinking" is a hot curriculum subject across the country. In California, often the national trend-setter, a semester of critical thinking has been made a requirement for graduation from the state university and college system.[2] The number of textbooks in the area, always an indicator of the market and hence the growth in courses and enrollments, has mushroomed from 28 new texts between 1970 and 1978 (a large enough growth as it was), to 41 new texts or editions in the past five years.[3] Critical thinking is not a new subject, but it has acquired a fresh appeal and *éclat*.

My purpose is not to explain this phenomenon, but it is instructive to speculate about its causes. Perhaps most influential is the widespread perception that our students are passing through college (and university) without picking up the ability to interact critically with their academic subjects and without acquiring a general ability to respond in a critical way to the many issues of broad social and political concern which they must soon encounter as full-fledged, and presumably educated, citizens. At a time when flexibility and certain generalist's skills seem required for a kaleidoscopic career pattern instead of the single vocation of the past, too many of our students seem deficient in general, integrative thinking ability. We find that reading competence is low; writing ability is woeful; the capacity to understand and evaluate reasoning and to construct thorough arguments is rudimentary. We are noticing that students coming to us from high school seem less well prepared than formerly. The humanities chairperson at a Pennsylvania college wrote recently:

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"The faculty at our school has grown increasingly concerned that many of our students arrive in college with their critical thinking skills in only the most minimal state of development."[4] In sum, there is a widely shared sense of a "problem," and the term "critical thinking" seems to some a ready and apt label for what is missing and needed.

Whether these speculations are close to the mark or not, there can be no doubt that post-secondary educational institutions are turning in increasing numbers to the "critical thinking" course or program in order to bring into the curriculum what is thought to be an essential ingredient of a basic general education. Yet when setting up a course designed to remove deficiencies and promote proficiencies in critical thinking, the instructor will immediately discover that there is no historically tried-and-true syllabus, no standard approach followed with only minor variations in established textbooks, and indeed no agreement in the scattered literature about what the concrete objectives of such a course should be. In fact, the concept of "critical thinking" is itself controversial. Moreover, subjects as diverse as political science, rhetoric, speech, communications, English, and philosophy claim sovereignty over it. The new critical thinking course, if it is to be responsibly established, will clearly have to be the result of some careful conceptual sifting in addition to the standard sorts of syllabus planning associated with the creation of a new offering.

This article aims to contribute to the task of getting a conceptual fix on the proper objectives of a critical thinking course. Its guiding assumption is that argumentative reasoning lies at the heart of critical thinking. The body of the article consists of suggestions (and descriptions) of three different ways a course might be focused on argumentative reasoning, and proposes three *desiderata* that should be covered whichever the focus. The article ends with some brief comments on the prospective benefits and dangers of critical thinking courses, and a word about where in the college's curriculum critical thinking should be taught.

II

How should this vague, honorific term "critical thinking" be defined so that it might inspire behavioral objectives and a syllabus for a course? I take the word "critical" to be the operative one of the pair; "thinking" sets the *definiendum* off from singing or swimming, but it is entirely too broad to be helpful. "Critical" thinking conveys the idea that we should not accept ideas, beliefs, proposals, judgments, policies — I shall henceforth lump all these together under the rubric "claims" — without, first, running them through a quick screening to see if they are open to question or to challenges, and if they are, then, second, subjecting them to as thorough an evaluative assessment as time, resources, and the

importance of the issue call for. The latter is a critique, a critical appraisal of the cogency of claims; not a purely negative criticism, but a probing of their merits as well as their deficiencies, with a properly qualified overall judgment as its end product.

It follows that a critical thinker does not accept claims just on another's word, or because they are in the air, or because there is a groundswell of support for them. A critical thinker judges for herself, for himself, in a probing, reflective way. Moreover, not only are the claims of others supposed to be subjected to critical appraisal, our own claims ought to have no exemption, and, indeed, we ought to expose and scrutinize our own unattended assumptions when they shape our explicit beliefs and conduct on important matters. Finally, a critical thinker values reflective, critical deliberation in general, acts in ways that promote it, and respects the independent critical judgment of others. Hence in speaking or writing with a view to persuading others — functioning as an advocate, he or she will eschew manipulation, seeking instead to offer full explanations and reasoned arguments.

Putting these ideals into practice requires an ability to reason well and an attitude of commitment to reason. For, problematic claims which merit our acceptance will be those which we reckon to be well supported by good reasons. Also, respecting the critical autonomy of others consists of addressing them with reasons, appealing to their reasoning. To employ and appreciate reasoning in these ways, we must have the capacity to reason and care to use it.

Outside any particular context, "reason" is vague, but what it means here can be made clear. A problematic claim worthy of acceptance is made so by evidence or other sorts of consideration which show it is plausible, that objections to it may be rejected, and that alternatives are less plausible. In short, claims worthy of assent are those which are supported by good arguments. Argument is *the* tool of reasoned critical appraisal — of our own and others' claims and actions — and the vehicle of reasoned advocacy of claims and conduct. Good reasons mean good arguments; good reasoning means good argumentation.

By putting these considerations together we can arrive at a quite specific and operational notion of critical thinking, or at least a major component of it (which it is possible and worthwhile to teach in a college course). In general terms, critical thinking is the ability to deal with arguments and an appreciation of the value (and limits) of argumentation. In the next section of the article I want to spell out what is involved in "to deal with arguments" and to offer some rough guidelines for the design of a critical thinking course. What I hope to have made clear so far is that the major component of what is called "critical thinking" is the ability and disposition to deploy arguments when critically assessing beliefs and actions and when advocating them to others.

III

Claims are present or presented to us for our adherence or acceptance in either of two ways. They may simply be asserted unescorted, alone or as elements of a complex group, either coming at us from others in spoken or written discourse of many kinds in many contexts, or emerging unbidden from the huge store making up our beliefs. Or, claims may be accompanied by arguments alleged to support them, showing why the claims merit acceptance. In the first situation, the presumption is that the claim is acceptable on the face of it and needs no defense; in the second, there is implicit recognition (or belief) that the claim is problematic and those who propose it bear the onus of proof, which obliges them to defend it. Corresponding to these two ways claims occur — with and without supporting arguments — there are two ways to focus a critical thinking course. It can take as its point of departure undefended claims and proceed to show how these may be assessed for their problematic character, and, further, if open to challenge or question, tested for their plausibility. Argument plays a role at every point here, as I will show in a moment. The alternative is to focus the course on claims already defended by arguments. The elements of such a course will be the identification of arguments, their extraction and display, and their critical assessment.

There is a third way to focus a critical thinking course when dealing with arguments. We not only can react to claims by critically analyzing them or the arguments defending them; we also can inquire into the plausibility of claims by testing them with arguments of our own. Furthermore, we can propose claims to others, advocating them by using arguments to elicit acceptance. We ourselves can be the proponents of argued claims. Accordingly, it is possible to construct a critical thinking course dealing with arguments by focusing on how to construct arguments to test claims or persuade others to accept them.

I call these three starting points, respectively, 1) claim analysis, 2) argument analysis, and 3) argument construction. It will become clear, if it isn't already obvious, that this separation is artificial; these three "focuses" are inseparable in "the process of reasonably deciding what to believe and do."[3] It may be that all three can be fully covered in a semester- or quarter-length course, but I strongly doubt it. Teaching all that is involved in any one alone is such a big job that to try for more would risk overloading the course. By focusing on one only, the relevance of the other two can be given some mention and can be located in a manageable framework. Besides, whichever starting point is taken, there are three *desiderata* which, I am going to argue, ought to be covered and therefore constitute ground common to the three focuses. Before giving that account (in section IV), I need to spell out more fully what can be involved in each of these approaches.

1. Claim Analysis.

A course organized around the critical analysis of claims would best work on claims belonging to one or a manageable number of categories. The students will have to get the information needed to judge the claims, and that will be difficult if you try to cover claims from too many categories. Moreover, the course needs some principle(s) of selection to avoid helter-skelter disorganization.

I have taught a three-week unit on newspaper and television news reports, and a similar unit on advertising claims (scarcely enough time in either case). You might take claims that seem to constitute the conventional wisdom about foreign affairs, or about business ethics, union attitudes — the list can go on and on. Or, you might start the investigation of a theory, an academic discipline, or a worldview with an examination of its central claims. It is vital to work with material that interests your students. Your interests, competencies, and the availability of relevant information should also have a bearing on your choices. It seems to me that claim analysis will have at least the following four steps, for each of which arguments must be used or inspected.

a. Interpretation. It is necessary to probe the meaning of the claims and judge their significance. This means looking at their implications and their consequences. Definitions may be helpful. Arguments about inferences, precedents, and causal connections should be used and critically assessed. Interpretation often calls for hypothesis formation and testing: hypothesizing various plausible alternative interpretations of a claim and testing to see which best explains it. Arguments for and against competing hypotheses should then be considered.

b. Classification. Once the claim's meaning and significance are clear, it is useful to classify it in a way that will bring out the types of considerations that bear on its truth. For example, claims about the causes of the Korean war are checked in different ways from claims about migratory songbird sightings; theories explaining inflation are judged on different grounds from proposals for mandatory seatbelt use. This sorting guides the search for premises in arguments designed to support or undercut a claim.

c. Location. Claims are interesting primarily when they are problematic. Thus we want to find out what arguments have been or can be mounted for an interesting-looking claim, and what arguments exist or can be formulated to throw doubt on it. What can be said in favor of "equal pay for equal work" and what are reasons for rejecting it? Perhaps the claim can be located in a current dispute — e.g., "the fetus is human" in the abortion controversy — as a premise in the argument for some other position. This step, then, involves gaining an appreciation for the dialectical connections of the claim, its place in the back-and-forth of argumentation.

d. Disposition. Here one builds the best argumentative case for or against the claim that one can, defending one's arguments as far as possible against anticipated objections, countering arguments aimed at rebutting one's conclusions. The knowledge of what the objections and rebuttals will be comes from step c, but at this last stage the idea is to come to a final, balanced judgment about the claim, appropriately qualified when necessary. Depending on how earth-shattering the claim is, and how complex the controversy, this step may require a short paragraph, an essay, or a book.

2. Argument Analysis.

What I have in mind here is the kind of approach which takes arguments offered in support of claims as its raw material and is designed to teach students how to recognize, interpret, and evaluate them. (This is the usual critical thinking course in philosophy departments, sometimes called "informal logic," but there is no reason why a qualified person from another discipline should not teach such a course; philosophers have no monopoly on the use and appraisal of arguments.)

Since the objective of such a course is the critical analysis of real arguments, with all their vagueness, incompleteness, leaps of inference, and irrelevant digression, such actual arguments must be the materials on which the students practice their craft. The Dick-and-Jane examples of textbook syllogisms may teach some logical theory, but they produce no practical skills. Thus the daily newspaper, magazines, briefs to government, reports with supported recommendations, books, and scholarly journals will all be grist for the mill here. Working with arguments people have really used does not rule out starting with simple or short examples and slowly increasing the level of complexity; nor does it disallow concentrating on just one aspect of an argument for teaching purposes, ignoring others for the time being. Given this attention to arguments as found in various contexts of public discourse, an argument analysis course will have to cover at least the following three elements.

a. Identification. Public discourse is of course multifunctional, and students have to learn the contexts in which arguments are typically employed as well as the pragmatic and grammatical indicators of arguments. It takes skill, for example, to pick out an argument in a newspaper editorial from the surrounding editorial bafflegab: background, asides, digressions, and embellishments.

b. Reconstruction. As a pedagogical move you have to set out any argument you want to assess — extract it from its surrounding discourse and restate it in a straightforward way that makes its meaning clear (though retaining built-in ambiguity or vagueness), with tacit steps in inferences made explicit. The discipline of this argument reconstruction requires, and so reinforces, habits of careful reading and the appreciation of language.

c. Evaluation. The first two steps of argument analysis set the stage for critical assessment of the argument. Does it establish its conclusion, or at least give some support for it? How strong a case does the argument provide? What are its defects and might they be overcome by additional evidence or other kinds of supporting considerations? Does it suffer from a myopic or biased perspective? How well does it meet objections that are well-known or that the thoughtful critic can produce? Does it presuppose an interest, ideology, or worldview that in the context detracts from its cogency? Is some elementary fallacy present which simply undercuts its validity or force? The evaluation of a brief, one-shot argument (e.g., many letters to the editor) will differ in complexity from the evaluation of a carefully constructed, extended argumentative case for a position (e.g., a journal article). Clearly the "evaluation" unit of an argument analysis course should aim at conveying a complex of sophisticated critical dispositions and reflective attitudes.[6]

3. Argument Construction.

We have two usual reasons for making arguments. We may want to *inquire* into the plausibility of a claim, and so need to construct arguments for and against it to see how cogent a case may be made in its behalf. Or, we may want to *advocate* a claim to some audience, and hence need to construct arguments to try to convince that audience to accept the claim. A course centered on argument construction should distinguish these two functions. Whether it is restricted to one or the other will depend primarily on the time available. The two are related, however; you violate the attitude of respect for reason, which is a goal of a critical thinking course, if you encourage students to advocate positions they do not themselves consider defensible. Thus reasonable advocacy presupposes critical inquiry. At the same time, if you imagine yourself to represent a reasonable and informed audience of one, then any argumentative inquiry you undertake entails that you play the role of advocate on its behalf and the role of devil's advocate against it.

A critical thinking course focused on argument construction can include three related tasks: teaching how to find information and to think of arguments which support or go against the claims under investigation or advocacy; teaching how to sort out arguments according to the dialectical roles they play; and teaching how to present arguments in a clear and cogent manner.

a. Finding reasons. According to one plausible approach, some principles of classification are needed to sort claims into different groups according to the kinds of support appropriate to them. For example, claims about meanings (needing definitions or linguistic analysis) are distinct from claims of empirical fact (needing evidence from observations or perhaps sampling). Both of these are distinct from theory-laden claims, on the one hand, and recommendations for action or policies, on the other. The point is that some way of making

progress on the easily-stymying job of finding reasons has to be offered to students learning how to build arguments.[7]

b. Dialectical organization. Arguments play different "dialectical" roles, and students need to learn these in order properly to locate their arguments when constructing a case, whether for purposes of inquiry or advocacy. These dialectical roles include: (i) directly supporting the claim at issue, (ii) criticizing premises or inferences in that support, (iii) attacking the premises or inferences in those criticisms, (iv) directly attacking the main claim, giving arguments to show it is false or otherwise unacceptable, and (v) criticizing the premises or inferences in such attacks on the main claim. This whole process of (i)-(v) may be directed at some alternative to the initial position under investigation or being advocated. You can keep track of these roles by remembering that all such dialectical moves are elaborations of two motifs: arguments supporting the claim with critical assessments of those arguments, and arguments against the claim with critical evaluations of them.[8]

c. Presentation. A goal of a critical thinking course is to encourage argumentation in the deliberation and decision-making of daily life, personal and public. Thus the communication of arguments should be efficient and attractive. Arguments advocating a case should be clear, relevant, addressed to the concerns and beliefs of the audience, sufficient in scope and documentation, with problematic assumptions defended and potential misunderstandings cleared up. It is no disrespect to reason if you present a sound case in a persuasive way; on the contrary. But as we well know, skills in the effective presentation of arguments are acquired, and with effort. My guess is that composition and rhetoric courses place too much emphasis on argument presentation, to the detriment of argumentative inquiry, while presentation is neglected in philosophy courses.

In sum, the preceding pages constitute my suggestions about ways of dealing with arguments in a critical thinking course: namely, focusing on claim analysis, on argument analysis, and on argument construction. Earlier I said that whichever of these points of departure one takes, there are three *desiderata* which should enter into any argument-centered critical thinking course. I now want to introduce these and say why they are needed.

IV

However you approach teaching students to deal with arguments with a view to instilling critical thinking skills and attitudes, you should emphasize how reasoning is "dialectical," and in consequence how it requires obtaining a great deal of information, on the one hand, and how it entails transcending one's

comfortable, parochial beliefs, on the other hand. Let me explain these perhaps cryptic contentions.

There is a great temptation to view the giving of reasons as a one-shot or two-shot enterprise. *X* makes a claim, says why he thinks it is true, and stops there. *Y*, alleging superior insight into reasoning, makes a claim, gives her reason for accepting it, then adds an argument against it, and stops there. *Both X* and *Y* pay mere lip service to reasoning: the arguments they present really play no role in grounding their claims in reason. They just reinforce their unreflective judgments and prejudices. As I hope to have made clear already, genuine respect for reason requires withholding assent from a problematic claim until it has been tested by a careful argumentative inquiry, in which reasons supporting it are themselves appraised by arguments, and reasons against it are similarly subjected to argued critique. Commitment to belief is made only after, and on the basis of, argumentative inquiry. In most vexing social, political, economic, and ethical issues, and in most controversial intra-discipline general theoretical issues, the defense of any one position will require a patient, thorough, and open-minded canvassing and testing of a large number of arguments representing a wide range of positions. My first point, then, is that a critical thinking course dealing with arguments should convey to students this back-and-forth, in-and-out character of reasoned inquiry, and it should show how responsible and effective advocacy similarly addresses the range of sub-issues and points of view. This is what I mean by emphasizing how reasoning is "dialectical."

One implication of this dialectical character of genuine reasoned argumentation is that you have to obtain a lot of information in order to assess a position properly. What are the different positions on the issue? What arguments have been advanced in their support and in criticism of them from other points of view? What factual information has a bearing on the controversy, and where may it be obtained? What conceptual, definitional, or theoretical points are at issue? What background ideological commitments are exhibited in the various ways of looking into the controversy? A critical thinking course dealing with arguments should make concrete for students the need to ask these questions and should give them practical advice about how to get at the needed information.[4]

A second implication of argument being dialectical is that the full appreciation of an issue and the thoughtful defense of a position require getting outside of one's set ways of thinking. It is nearly impossible to give a fair argumentative test to almost any interesting, controversial claim without recognizing how our own prior interests, commitments, and prejudgments can cause us to distort or undervalue arguments coming from different outlooks, and indeed to completely overlook arguments which come from quite different

perspectives. A critical thinking course dealing with arguments should draw students beyond their prejudices. Richard Paul has stated the problem nicely:

> Any student studying critical thinking at the university level has a highly developed belief system buttressed by deep-seated uncritical, egocentric and sociocentric habits of thought by which he interprets and processes his or her experience, whether academic or not, and places it into some larger perspective. The practical result is that most students find it easy to question just, and *only*, those beliefs, assumptions and inferences that they have already "rejected" and very difficult, in some cases traumatic, to question those in which they have a personal, egocentric investment.[10]

Of course, this applies to community college students just as much as to university students. With all students the problem Paul describes is difficult to overcome. Yet the cost of failing to try is high: the critical thinking course may, paradoxically, *reinforce* prejudice and parochialism. As Paul puts it, "the student unwittingly learns to use critical concepts and techniques to maintain his most deep-seated prejudices and irrational habits of thought by masking them in more 'rational' form and by developing some facility in putting his opponent on the defensive."[11]

These three *desiderata* — conveying the dialectical character of genuinely fruitful argumentation; getting across the need, and ways, to acquire as much relevant information as possible before any final argumentative assessment; and drawing students out of, and beyond, their pre-critical orientations — are inextricably bound together. Moreover, they belong in any course dealing with arguments, whether it be centered on the critique of claims, on the critique or construction of arguments, or some other approach.

V

The general benefits of a successful critical thinking course that conveys a respect for the function of argumentation in rational deliberation and belief formation, and instills skills in the critique and use of arguments, should be evident. There are certain academic gains too. Students are forced out of their "please the teacher" responses, learn to think more for themselves, and react more thoughtfully to course materials. Their written work tends to improve. Even the weakest students show improvement in their reading comprehension. A medium-term benefit is that students become aware of their rudimentary habits of thought (express an opinion and quit; or express an opinion, give a reason for it, and quit), and they become open to the idea that they had hitherto picked up some pretty vague and precarious doctrines. Especially for the bright or serious student, the grasp and internalization of dialectical reasoning and all it implies is a liberating experience and a powerful new instrument of thought.

Perhaps more emphasis should be placed on the dangers and risks that lurk in the enterprise of a critical thinking course. I have mentioned and would stress Richard Paul's warnings about reinforcing prejudice and irrational habits of thought. Also, students readily get the false impression that good critical thinking is a pure skill that can, like good grammar, be exercised by itself, independent of background knowledge and general erudition. At the other extreme, students can easily become discouraged. Finding out how much discipline and effort are required, and how slowly progress is made, they give up and just go through the motions until the course is over.

These dangers carry some implications for the question of who in a college should teach a critical thinking course. It probably should be someone in a social science or humanities department, but not necessarily a philosopher. (The philosopher who wants to teach classical symbolic logic as critical thinking is as bad a choice as the English teacher who wants to teach standard literary criticism as critical thinking.) Teachers of communications or speech or rhetoric may be as qualified as informal logicians, provided they aim for more than the elegant and effective presentation of arguments. But perhaps the *sine qua non* is a real interest and commitment to the enterprise.

"Shouldn't we all be teaching critical thinking in all our courses? And if so, doesn't that mean we don't need any special critical thinking courses?" My answer is that we all should be teaching our subjects in ways that encourage and reward a critical thinking approach by students, certainly. If we don't challenge their assumptions, insist on reasoned grounds for claims, foster a critical, questioning approach to contentions, and convey a deep respect for dialectical argumentation, then we are guilty of miseducation. However, we cannot teach the "content" for which we are primarily responsible in courses not designated as having critical thinking as their subject matter, and at the same time set out, explain, and give practice in all of the concepts, tools, devices, skills, and attitudes that can take up an entire course devoted exclusively to critical thinking. That important task should be the mandate of at least one distinct course in the college curriculum, and ideally what is learned in it will be integrated into and reinforced in all the other courses a student takes.

Notes

[1]This paper was written from notes used for a workshop, "Teaching Critical Thinking: What Can Be Done in the Classroom?" prepared for the Community College Humanities Association workshop on Teaching Critical Thinking held at San Francisco, November 17-18, 1983. I am grateful to CCHA for inviting me to participate. I would like to thank my colleague, Professor Ralph H. Johnson, for his ideas contributed during the joint preparation of an earlier workshop design. I also gratefully acknowledge the many fruitful ideas from fellow panelists and registrants.

[2]Cf., California State University Executive Order No. 338.

[3]Cf., Ralph H. Johnson and J. Anthony Blair, "A Bibliography of Recent Work in Informal Logic," *Informal Logic Newsletter*, 5, no. 3 (July, 1983), 3-15.

[4]Personal correspondence.

[5]This definition and a detailed operational specification of critical thinking are offered by Robert H. Ennis in "Rational Thinking and Educational Practice," in Jonas F. Soltis, ed., *Philosophy and Education*: 80th Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, Part I, (Chicago: NSSE, 1981.) I recommend this article highly.

[6]This account of the argument analysis approach is extremely compressed. Many texts set it out at length (cf. the textbooks listed in the bibliography cited in note 3, above). My own expanded account is found in the textbook Ralph Johnson and I co-authored, *Logical Self Defense*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited, 1983), available in the U.S. from McGraw-Hill International Book Company, Princeton Road, Hightstown, NJ.

[7]The textbook that does this best is *A Rhetoric of Argument*, by Jeanne Fahnestock and Marie Secor (New York: Random House, 1982).

[8]For a lucid, uncomplicated account of some fundamental concepts of argumentation, and a step-by-step method of using arguments to compose an inquiry-oriented argumentative essay, see the excellent handbook for college freshmen, Jack W. Meiland, *College Thinking: How To Get the Best Out of College* (New York: Mentor, 1981), chs. 3-5. Consider assigning this handbook as required reading.

[9]An interesting program has been developed at St. Lawrence University to integrate critical thinking, clear writing, and information acquisition through library research. Called the "BASK" program (Basic Academic Skills), it was written up in the *Informal Logic Newsletter*, 2, no. 3 (June, 1980), 16-18. For further information write Professor Baylor Johnson, Department of Philosophy, St. Lawrence University, Canton, NY 13617.

[10]Richard Paul, "Teaching Critical Thinking in the 'Strong' Sense," *Informal Logic Newsletter*, 4, no. 2 (May 1982), 3. Dr. Paul is the director of the Center for Critical Thinking and Moral Critique at Sonoma State University, Rohnert Park, CA 94928.

[11]Paul, 2-3.

Greece and Rome: Outdate or Update?

Mark Morford

The theme of this essay is the place of a traditional liberal arts subject, the study of ancient Greece and Rome, in education during the so-called "Information Age." The essay is based on a recognition of the continuity of the intellectual heritage of western culture and on the assumption that education is focused on the future and founded on the achievements of the past. In studying the world of antiquity we are dealing with civilizations long "dead" (in one sense) and languages no longer spoken as living expressions of the human spirit. Yet the civilizations of Greece and Rome are far from dead (except where they are badly taught, and bad teaching will kill off any civilization), and their study can and should be part of a living curriculum in the humanities.

The Information Age presumably is so titled because information can be stored and speedily made accessible through the computer and its other manifestations, such as the word processor, and because information can be conveyed great distances to large numbers of people through the media. It is an age in which an increasingly large number of citizens are working in what might be called information, as opposed to industrial jobs, and the balance is swinging more and more decisively towards a non-industrial economy. No one can be unaffected by this profound revolution. The term "Information Age," however, does not convey other and more threatening aspects of our machine-based age: the manipulation of information by governments, corporations, and individuals for their own purposes, often without consideration of the interests of individual citizens; the limitations of machines as opposed to the human mind; above all, the power of machines to blind individuals to their limitations, the most serious of which, by far, is the inability to make qualitative judgments. The first principle that one should be taught in dealing with computers is "GIGO" — garbage in, garbage out — for the machine can perform many functions better and quicker than its human operator, but the quality of what it writes is no better than what is put into it. Yet this simple, fundamental principle is ignored constantly in our present-day culture, and from that ignorance stem so many of the problems that we face as teachers in the humanities. The machines which store information and retrieve it at our command are our servants: it is we who tell them what to do and we who decide what information they will store for us. They surely are meant to be helpers, saving us time-consuming chores and allowing us to use our

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time better. But if, as many people believe has already happened, the machines become our masters, then indeed the Information Age will become the age in which we lose our most fundamental liberties. We must ensure that the computer liberates, rather than enslaves. The speed of personal computers, the mass media, and electronic gathering and distribution of information give us an opportunity to increase the role of the humanities in our culture — if that is what we wish to do. In this exciting process, I believe, even the civilizations of the past have a part. Far from accepting the common prejudice that the study of ancient Greece and Rome is outdated, I believe that they do have a significant part to play even in an updated educational system.

As humanists let us accept that the machines of the Information Age are not necessarily a threat. Many of our colleagues will prefer to look the other way, but one cannot ignore a profound scientific and cultural revolution in this way. The time is long past (indeed it probably never did exist) when we can act like Samuel Butler's Erehwonians and turn our backs on mechanical progress as they did in the Book of the Machines. Yet only in very recent years has our society made a systematic attempt to take account of the revolution brought about by electronic machines and adjust its system of education accordingly. Generally it has been through technical training that students so far have been encouraged to come to terms with the Information Age. Yet consider the predicament **they** are in. From childhood they have lived with machines, the car, the TV, and now the computer. They have been bombarded with advertisements and enticements to do this or that, to imitate this or that current idol, to follow the latest fads in clothes, gadgets or machines, that are often beyond their means. It is paradoxical that only in very recent times has our society begun to take seriously the challenge that the Information Age poses, that is, to learn how to remain a human being when surrounded by powerful machines, which at the same time offer the prospect of a better life and threaten to deprive that life of many of its human qualities. These issues were addressed in the Rockefeller Report of 1980, entitled *The Humanities in American Life*. A major concern of its authors was the inability of an educational system without the humanities to train citizens to make choices, and this is the most important difference between the person who is able to live a creative life in the Information Age and those who will be living a passive and far poorer life.

Surprisingly strong support for this view is to be found in John Naisbitt's stimulating and controversial book, *Megatrends*. Naisbitt points out that our system of education in the last two decades has failed to keep up with the needs of citizens in the Information Age. The failure is not so much in training people to use computers, as it is in training them for lifelong learning. As he says: "If you specialize too much you may find your specialty becoming obsolete in the long run. As a generalist, committed to lifelong education, you can change with the

times" (96). In particular, the Information Age is already one in which individuals can be more free to make individual choices, more free to choose how to spend their time, more free to become involved in community activities and to affect local and even national issues. The concept of "networking" (as opposed to the hierarchical pyramid, which is the traditional pattern for our society) is already a reality, and will be increasingly the normal pattern in the next few years. Thus more individuals will take part — and an effective one — in making decisions. Naisbitt asks: "Are the people whose lives are affected by a decision part of the process of arriving at that decision? . . . People must feel that they have 'ownership' in a decision if they are to support it with any enthusiasm" (188).

It is obvious from this that perhaps the single most important need for an adequate education in the Information Age is to develop a lifelong ability to judge, to be able to make decisions that will improve the quality of life. And it is in the development of this critical faculty that the study of the ancient world has its part.

There are, however, many practical difficulties which are all too familiar. We face declining educational budgets, taxpayer revolts, political pressures that militate against educational ideals, goals different from our own in our communities, and many others. In the AACJC report on *Strengthening the Humanities in Community Colleges*, also published in 1980, humanities faculty were urged to "study and develop new and better approaches to teaching the humanities, drawing where appropriate on resources available through various organizations" (119). More specifically faculty were urged to "develop course units which will provide humanities content for technical and career students." These are two admirable pieces of advice for faculty, but how practical are they in the face of current difficulties? When the cry is "Back to the Basics," how can we justify study of ancient civilizations, and having justified it, how can we find room for it in a crowded curriculum? There are no easy answers, but many people have already made progress towards solutions of these problems.

In the summer of 1980, with the support of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), members of the departments of classics and of history at Ohio State University offered a two-week intensive workshop for two-year college faculty. This followed the completion of a four-year undertaking, the production of a substantial body of audiovisual materials to support instruction in the civilizations of Greece and Rome at the college level. The researchers were eager to share their material and their excitement at what they had learned in those four years, yet they were faced with the fact that few faculty were in a position to offer courses devoted entirely to the ancient civilizations. A typical pattern is for a faculty member to be required to teach a comprehensive course in Western Civilization, of which the civilizations of Greece and Rome occupy at most a few weeks, and more often a few days. Stimulating as the 1980 workshop

was for all who participated, it pointed up the acute problems that so many humanities teachers face in trying to select from the boundless material worth studying a few things that will lastingly affect their students' lives. The problem of selection is indeed basic, and it was given much attention in planning a second Institute in Classics in 1983, again supported by NEH and held at Ohio State last summer. Nineteen faculty members from two- and four-year colleges spent six weeks in intensive study of Greek and Roman civilizations. They met for at least three, and sometimes as many as six hours daily, and in addition the nineteen spent many hours in the library working on their own projects. On eight evenings films were scheduled, including the two Kakoyannis versions of Euripides' *Iphigenia* and *Electra*, and four segments of *I, Claudius*. In the final week the participants presented their own projects, which varied greatly in scope but had in common a direct relation to their regular teaching. It was an exciting and exhausting program, but at the end of it all the participants felt, first, that they had been immersed in something immensely worthwhile; secondly, that these were subjects they knew could and should be taught in regular humanities programs.

Now for most humanities programs it is likely that study of Greece and Rome means reading a fair amount of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* (usually as part of a Great Books course); one or two tragedies (perhaps the *Oedipus Tyrannus* and the *Antigone* or *Medea*); some Plato (probably the *Apology* or selections from the *Republic*); and some Aristotle (perhaps some of the *Poetics* or the *Nicomachean Ethics*). From Roman literature and history far less is usually chosen — some of the *Aeneid*, perhaps some Catullus and Cicero, and less commonly perhaps one or two of Juvenal's satires. In history and civilization there is too little time for much discussion of more than a few highlights — fifth century Athens, the Peloponnesian War, Alexander the Great; in Roman history perhaps the Punic Wars, the achievements of Julius Caesar and Augustus, and the collapse of the Empire. Well may we ask, "How does this lead to an improvement in the quality of our students' lives?" We may also ask, "How can faculty who are not trained as classicists know what else they can select and how can they acquire the knowledge to be able to teach it with confidence?" In the 1983 Institute an attempt was made to address these problems.

In the first place some analysis was made of the features of the classical civilizations that have proved fundamental to subsequent western civilizations, or that show aspects of the human experience common alike to ancient and modern men and women. For example, Americans generally subscribe to the concept of democracy, but a close look at, say, Athenian democracy in its heyday leads to a lot of troublesome questions. How can one explain away the source of funds for the building program that produced the Parthenon, money contributed by Athens' allies, or rather subjects, for defence purposes? How can

one glorify a civilization that excluded 50% of its adults from active participation in the political process, and was itself based upon slave labor? Was the ordered world of Greek religion, as seen in the Parthenon sculptures or the plays of Sophocles, as stable and rational as the handbooks tell us it was? In the Roman world, how stable was the political system that gave us so many of our constitutional terms — senate, judiciary, and so on? To what extent can we justify an empire based upon military might? What happened to tribal and other cultures, often long-established, when the Romans came? How well did Roman urbanization work? What of Roman religion — formal and traditional in its public manifestations but hardly believed in by educated people? These and many other questions surely should compel students to make critical judgments. But we cannot raise them without a careful selection of material and access to modern scholarship that has made such questions unavoidable.

In the 1983 Institute only one week was spent in discussion of general aspects of the ancient civilizations. The main part of the time was devoted to four weeklong workshops on particular subjects that have been significantly advanced by recent scholarship. These were Greek and Roman Religion, Ancient Sport, Roman Law, and Women in Classical Literature. These are not entirely random selections, although one could easily come up with four other areas equally appropriate. Surprisingly little has been done for the teaching of Greek and Roman religion despite the popularity of courses in mythology. But the workshop leader, Susan Cole of the University of Illinois at Chicago Circle, showed how recent archaeological discoveries have changed the traditional picture and how well they can be integrated with literary readings. Joseph Tebben of the Ohio State University showed how closely integrated Greek religion was with the great athletic festivals, and he also showed how athletics reflect the basic values of the society in which they take place — including our own. Christine Perkell of Dartmouth College showed the participants how to read Greek and Roman poetry in the light of modern feminist (and not so feminist) ideas, and so provided a challenging viewpoint from which to look at the status of women in Greece and Rome — and in our own day. Finally, John Vaughn, also of the Ohio State University, showed how the Roman genius for law developed, and from actual cases explained how the principles of Roman law have survived into our own day. Modern cases — for example Palsgraf vs. the LIRR or Clarence Darrow's defence of Leopold and Loeb — underlined the timeless nature of the problems that the Romans were dealing with in their system of law.

These four areas were selected from many. The workshops demonstrated that in each area recent advances in knowledge can easily be made available to those who would like to include these subjects as units or modules in their Western Civilization courses. Here the "information revolution" should be of

practical help, providing access to articles and bibliographies through the computer, the word-processor, or even (despite the copyright laws!) the Xerox machine. As our knowledge of the ancient world expands, so does our capacity for transmitting it and for gaining access to it.

It is not hard to justify the study of the ancient world as a part of democratic education. The traditional goals of democratic education are to develop in citizens their intellectual, vocational, social, and personal potential. As is all too well known, we have in recent years seen stresses in our system in all four of these areas, and the first two of them have often become mutually antagonistic instead of complementary. Yet there is a widespread awareness that failure to address even one of the four goals will mean failure in all four. Sometimes the exclusive concentration on vocational goals brings short-term advantages — a higher paying first job, for example — and long-term disillusionment. Many are the older people who have realized ten, twenty, or even more years later, how much they need the humanities to give them more to enjoy in life than is offered by their job, their skill, or their often passive recreations. The need for intellectual as well as vocational training is more widely appreciated now than it was even ten years ago, before the "information explosion" occurred. The call for a return to "the basics" was an early manifestation of this realization. Fortunately more people are beginning also to realize that a return to the basics is hardly likely to guarantee an educated citizenry, while teachers of the humanities have long recognized that the "back to basics" movement is as hostile to a real education in the liberal arts as many other non-humanistic crusades. However, even where a place for the humanities is achieved in a balanced educational system, the classical world is likely still to be thought of as an anachronism, irrelevant, elitist, and therefore undemocratic. Yet the experience of those who teach, for example, in large state universities is sufficient evidence for the importance of the contribution that the classics can make to a democratic education. In courses in Roman civilization, for example, students are surprised and relieved to find that the Romans faced problems like many that we still face in our society. For a student who reads in Thucydides how language is perverted in a time of civil strife or foreign warfare, the Ministry of Truth in Orwell's *1984* takes on a deeper meaning. Religious cults, drug-induced personality changes, and other pervasive problems that concern the tension between the individual and society, take on a new perspective when a student reads the *Bacchae* of Euripides. The stress between law and disorder, between the individual and the conventions of society, are put into sharper focus for the student who reads the *Antigone* or the *Medea*. To study the collapse of the Roman Republic is to be invited to think more deeply about power and the constitution. To read Juvenal's satires is to learn that the struggle between the little man and the impersonal system is as old as history itself, or to learn that the

pressures of living in the big city did not begin in twentieth century New York. These examples are all drawn from literary sources. With our audiovisual aids we can extend the bounds of our study of ancient humanity. No one who sees the Kakoyannis film of *Iphigenia at Aulis* can fail to think more deeply about the conflicting demands of the state and the family, of children and parents, of love and vanity, of war and peace. To study the archaeological record of Roman cities is to see how a powerful state exported its ideas to urban communities in many diverse regions, and to learn how these ideas were modified by the long-standing traditions of the cultures upon which they were imposed. All these examples, and many more, show that the study of the ancient world is as much study of ourselves as is any study in the humanities. *Properly taught*, it cannot fail to make people think about themselves and their societies, about questions of religion, politics, and many other areas of human achievement, that were important to the Greeks and Romans, and are equally important to us today.

"Properly taught" — there is the problem. Even while the realization dawns that one cannot exclude from a rounded education a crucial area of the history of western civilization, we continue to exclude that area from the training of a very large proportion of future teachers. Few are trained in the classics or in ancient history, and comparatively few will have had more than one or two university-level courses as training for dealing with the ancient world in the comprehensive courses that they will be teaching. It is true that many of the literary examples given above do appear in comparative literature courses, and others will be dealt with by anthropologists and social scientists. But to these scholars the ancient world is peripheral, or at best but one chapter in a much larger book of learning. The new discoveries in classical scholarship that are now being made are being made by classicists, and fresh interpretations of the great classical works of literature are for the most part being developed by those who have mastered the languages in which they were written. Here the problem is capable of solution. Of course the faculty member with a degree in English or social science or history cannot be expected to deal with the specialized scholarship in the classics. But it **is** possible to have access to the results of that scholarship, through published work or through units or other packages of instructional aids that have been marketed, or through contact with experts in the universities and elsewhere. The NEH has been generous in supporting summer institutes to help faculty extend their knowledge, and many universities have given time and energy to running programs for the benefit of teachers and college faculty. Like the 1983 Institute described above, institutes can be a crucial stimulus in improving the teaching of the classical world by those who attended. Yet in that case, only seven of the nineteen participants had degrees in classics, and the other 12 were given the opportunity to enrich their courses in an area that some perhaps had feared was out of their reach.

To engage in this kind of continued learning required time and energy, and the former means a commitment from the faculty member's institution. Two-year colleges are not and should not be research institutions, but the quality of teaching in them cannot remain vital and fresh without time for faculty to renew and extend their knowledge. Faculty members need the encouragement of their home institutions in this process, especially through time for reading and curricular planning. Many administrators are already cooperating in the development by faculty members of new programs in the humanities with a strong classical element, several with the support of NEH. The opportunities are there to be grasped, and they will often lead to new discoveries and fresh fields for teaching and, equally important, enjoyment.

The time is long past when Samuel Butler satirized the classical profession with his description of universities made up of Colleges of Unreason and staffed by Professors of Hypothetics, who mumbled in a dead language and were fearful of new discoveries. Unfortunately Butler's satire has been close to the commonly-held view of the classics until comparatively recent times. The truth is different: for example, the major classical professional association, the American Philological Association, has in the last fifteen years belied the narrow scholarship implied by the word "philological" by making vigorous efforts to respond to a broad range of the needs of the profession. Since 1971 it has run an advisory service, sending consultants free of charge (other than actual expenses) to help departments or institutions wishing to improve their programs, or even to start new ones, often with good and lasting results. In 1983 the Association established a permanent Committee on Educational Services, which seeks to serve, to provide information about scholarship and instruction in the classics, to put faculty who share problems and interests in touch with each other, and to maintain contact with the regional professional organizations. This is an ambitious undertaking, and it will be successful only if there is two-way communication between faculty members and the Association.

Progress has been made towards the goal of restoring a rounded education in the liberal arts as an essential part of the training of citizens, and the ancient world still has its place in the curriculum today. Those who teach in the classical field are alive and well, their studies are vigorous and vital, nor need they be threatened by the machines of the Information Age. The classics cannot be separated from the rest of the humanities, any more than the humanities can be excluded from education as a whole. Equally, the different constituencies of higher education cannot be isolated from each other. University teachers have too much in common with their colleagues in other types of institutions to be able to go their own way, while those who are teaching in community colleges can tell those who are in the research institutions where they can be most effective in bringing the results of their work to a wider public. Teachers of the

humanities have good reason to greet the Information Age with optimism, and the updating of the oldest field of study in the humanities should be but one example of the constant process of maintaining the solid foundation of an educational system in a changing world.

The Case for Nursing Ethics

Tziporah Kasachkoff

In the past few years, courses in medical ethics have proliferated not only within the curricula of medical schools but within the philosophy departments of undergraduate colleges as well. This is not surprising considering the general pervasiveness of medical concerns: though few of us are or will go on to become physicians, most of us have been or will become patients. Sooner or later all of us will find ourselves in a medical context, the subjects of health-care treatment of one sort or another. The study of medical ethics is thus, inevitably, the study of those principles which ought to guide behavior by which, almost certainly, we will all one day be affected.

However, a look at the content of most philosophy courses in bioethics produces, perhaps, a surprise. One finds that much of what these courses deal with has to do with the sorts of decisions with which *physicians*, as opposed to other health-care professionals, are concerned. To be sure, one aim of medical ethics courses is to encourage students to evaluate the legitimacy of the traditional view that it is the physician who has primary responsibility and authority for making the significant ethical decisions which arise in health-care contexts. Still, from the point of view of the student, either as potential health professional or as future patient, it would seem much more to the point if so-called "medical ethics" courses were to focus on areas of wider concern.

Specifically, I would like to suggest that the study of nursing ethics in the undergraduate philosophy curriculum not only best serves to illuminate philosophically problematic issues in health care, but in addition, it brings to the fore important general questions about moral responsibility itself. I shall begin by noting some disparities between the facts of our health-care system and the attention paid to them, both in general and in their study within bioethics courses.

Although the importance of the relationship between health care and moral philosophy has become increasingly apparent both to professionals in the

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health-care fields and to specialists in ethics, most of the literature and discussion in both fields has focused on the role of the *physician* as the paradigmatic health-care provider. What is generally overlooked is that physicians represent only eight percent of the total number of health-care personnel in this country and that nurses, whose numbers exceed those of all other health-care professionals, outnumber physicians by a ratio of three to one.

The emphasis of current medical-ethics courses on *physician* decision-making belies the actual nature of our health-care system and misplaces the locus of much of the responsibility for how patients are treated and affected by the decisions which are made. Nurses themselves have begun to point this out. In 1977 one nurse wrote that "physicians are often just not on the scene to assume this (decision-making) responsibility: an hour's surgical procedure, however essential, or a five-minute daily visit does not compare to the unique functions of the nursing profession in its efforts to maintain continuity of care all day long, day after day."[1] A year later, Robert Veatch noted:

> The emphasis on professional medical ethics education as the model for teaching may do disservice to those teaching in other services . . . . Physician ethics is not all there is to medical ethics . . . . if medical ethics includes the ethics of all decisions in the sphere of medicine, then the vast majority of medical ethical decisions are never made by physicians. Some are made by nurses and other health professionals.[2]

At least part of the explanation for the lack of attention paid to nurses relative to that given to physicians — despite the fact that nursing care is absolutely indispensible for the functioning of any hospital, critical-care unit, or facility for the chronically ill — is the discrepancy between the way in which nursing care affects patient outcome and the way that care is valued. It is hard to deny that it is the nurse who has the greatest role, especially with respect to the hospitalized patient, both for the comfort and for the day-to-day progress which defines the process of "getting better."

But nursing skills and expertise, precisely because they are so comprehensive and nurturing, tend to be valued less than the quantitative, highly specialized, and technical expertise of the physician. Given our society's emphasis on high technology, on machines, and on immediately discernible results, inevitably it is the physician and not the nurse who is viewed not only as the professional but as the one morally responsible for the decisions of the health-care team. As Andrew Jametoń has pointed out, "The cure function stereotypically associated with medicine is generally more valued than the care function similarly pegged to nursing . . . . The most valued forms of competence currently tend to reflect scientific and technological interests" and not those competencies that reflect emotional and interpersonal skills.[3]

Thus, even though most patients receive more care in terms of contact hours, alleviation of discomfort, health-care education, personal hygiene, medical monitoring, dietary counseling, and psychological support, it remains the physician and not the nurse whose power is reflected in the hospital hierarchy, in what is considered reasonable payment for services, in talk about the health-care system in general, and in the study of the ethical dimensions of health-care practice.

Another, not unrelated, anomaly is that despite the fact that physicians, hospitals, the public, and patients devalue the nurse as primary caretaker of the patient (and especially of the hospitalized patient), the nurse's and not the physician's professional code of ethics defines its members as "patient advocates." Of course, exactly what being the advocate of the patient can mean in a context in which the perception of the nurse's role cannot but limit the extent to which that role may be effectively performed, is problematic. The professional and moral implications of both the role of patient advocacy and the fulfillment of that role in today's health-care system await elaboration. No doubt this will be forthcoming as more attention is paid to the nurse in the study of health-care ethics.

I am not, however, suggesting that we study and teach nursing ethics solely for the particularly helpful way that it focuses on the ethics of patient care. For the study of nursing ethics draws our attention to issues which, though they arise for the nurse in quite specific nursing situations, nonetheless highlight what is important in the study of moral relations generally. Look, for example, at the situation of the nurse today, a situation which typically differs from that of the physician, presents moral problems *not* typically shared by physicians, but captures what is characteristic of moral life.

Today's nurse, unlike today's physician, is rarely self-employed. Almost all nurses work in and are employed by some health-care facility such as hospitals (which employ 75 percent of all practicing nurses), clinics, or nursing homes — hierarchies of greater or lesser rigidity consisting of the employer institution, the physician who issues medical directives the nurse is expected to follow, and the patient to whose well-being the nurse is ultimately committed. The nurse's role is thus, unlike the physician's, simultaneously defined by his or her position as employee, co-worker, and care provider for the patient. It is not surprising in this setting that the nurse is often caught in ethical dilemmas arising out of conflicting moral obligations. Indeed, so many moral conflicts are due to the specific complexity of the nurse's role that these conflicts have often been dubbed "problems of the nurse in the middle."

A look at what nurses generally consider to be their most pressing ethical problems is telling in this respect. A 1974 study reported that nurses viewed their greatest ethical problems to be implementing doctors' orders to resuscitate

patients who were terminally ill, assisting in abortions to which they were morally opposed, and deceiving patients who wanted to know the truth about their medical conditions.[4] All of these issues are of moral significance generally and, clearly, of specific relevance to the physician. But they constitute unique problems for the nurse who is forced into moral conflicts between obligations to her himself, the profession, the hospital, the physician, and, of course, the patient.

Although, the particular details of the ethical conflicts which confront the nurse are peculiar to the nursing situation, and despite the varied duties by which the nurse's role is defined, the ethical dilemmas which arise for the nurse can be said to be inherent in the very nature of the nursing role itself. However, it is also obvious that the study of nursing ethics has much to tell us generally about the contours of almost all human interaction. For the nurse's ethical situation, brought into especial relief by the complexity of the nurse's place in our health-care system, captures the moral tension that is endemic to all human interaction, and especially that which is characterized by the varied personal and professional roles through which most of us lead our lives.

In making the case for teaching nurses ethics, I should point out that it is not merely the nurse's specific situation which reveals to us in a particularly illuminating way the problems and conflicts in leading a morally responsible life amidst a network of intricate human relationships. The very defining concepts of the nursing profession are themselves of philosophical and ethical interest in this regard.

The nursing profession has always been identified with the expression of certain "gentle" virtues: caring, kindness, helpfulness, and compassion. Indeed, the traditional view of the physician is not without these associations either. Yet a review of the current literature in medical ethics reveals a remarkable emphasis on health-care *duties* and *obligations*, as if moral integrity in health-care contexts were exclusively a matter of not doing what is morally wrong. Very little mention is made of the moral person as opposed to the moral act. This lack of attention to the study of moral virtues in medical ethics reflects what is true of current moral philosophy generally. With some notable exceptions, discussion on the subject of morality has tended to focus almost exclusively on the evaluation of acts and not of agents, on priciples of action and not on assessments of character.[5] But it is one of the hallmarks of the study of nursing ethics that questions of moral virtue, conscience, consistency, and heroism stand in such bold relief.

Some questions which inevitably arise for the nurse with respect to these issues, but which are obviously of wider concern, are: *Can* it be one's professional duty to be a person of a certain moral description? If the nature of the nurse/patient relationship is to be understood as basically a contractual

arrangement, does it make sense to claim that in addition to the performance of services of a certain sort, the nurses "owe" the patient kindness and compassion? Are kindness and compassion the sorts of moral qualities that can be part of a contract? More generally, does being a nurse commit one to being a certain sort of person in addition to being a certain sort of professional? What are the moral as opposed to professional implications of thinking of oneself, say, as a philosopher, as a scientist, or even (for that matter) as a physician? These questions indicate, in more or less rough fashion, the kinds of issues which are at the core of any study of professional ethics. They point as well to areas of general concern within moral philosophy. But the peculiarly pressing manner in which these questions present themselves to nurses in the nursing situation makes the study of nursing ethics an especially direct and fruitful way of addressing issues whose investigation in artificial or simplified contexts runs the risk of flattening their full moral texture.

One of the sad ironies in the history of nursing is that although nurses have been dedicated to the expression of certain moral virtues as part of their professional norms, the vocation of nursing has not, until quite recently, been viewed as having independent professional status; nor have its members — given their perceived place in the health-care hierarchy — been viewed as having the ethical autonomy necessary for moral agency. As traditionally defined and perceived, nursing was a work subordinate to and dependent on physicians' directives. This to a large extent explains why public concern and professional study has focused on the ethical issues surrounding medical (i.e., physician) rather than nursing care. Given the American Medical Association's Committee on Nursing statement, in 1970, that nurses should remain under the supervision of physicians for the purpose of "extending the hands of the physicians," it is not difficult to see how the issues of both nursing practice and patient care have tended to be viewed as essentially issues of what it is that *physicians* decide.

But this view — still predominant among the general public although in the midst of change within the nursing profession itself[6] — would, in any case, not insulate nursing practice from ethical inquiry. On the contrary, the view that nurses as health-care practitioners are merely "handmaidens" of medicine, without independent professional definition of their own, raises issues which are important not only for health-care ethics but for professional ethics of all sorts and for questions of moral accountability in general. Indeed, the view that nurses are (or should be) subject to the authority of physicians in health-care practice raises rather than obviates the need to answer the important ethical questions: Can one relinquish one's ethical autonomy even in the interests of professional subordination? Is one morally responsible for the wrongdoing of others for whom one works? What does it mean to compromise one's own moral views for another's sake, and under what conditions can such a compromise be morally

defended? Is the very notion of a moral justification of an ethical compromise a self-contradiction? These are questions which cannot be avoided if we are to look closely at the moral implications of nursing, whether traditionally defined or not. They are also questions which, though almost totally neglected in the attention now paid to the ethics of physician decision-making in current medical-ethics courses, point to what is important in our moral relations with one another, whether in health-care or other contexts.

In the past five years more and more professional nursing journals have begun to publish articles by nurses who voice their concern over the lack of ethics courses for student nurses. One nurse, writing in a 1980 issue of *Nursing Outlook*, put it this way:

> We cannot consider ourselves independent professional practitioners if we cannot show students how ethical conflicts can be resolved . . . If we say that, as professional nurses, we are responsible to our clients and wish to function in an autonomous manner, then we must attend to that component of care that continues to grow in importance and complexity: ethical issues.[7]

This concern reflects what is, by now, a national concern on the part of nurses. The American Nurses' Association, the professional association for registered nurses in the United States, considered the topic of nursing ethics to be sufficiently important that it established a standing committee on ethics and devoted sessions to the topic during its annual conventions in 1980 and 1981. In 1981 the Virginia Nurses' Association devoted its entire three-day annual convention to the topic of nursing ethics. The National League of Nursing, the officially recognized national accrediting agency for basic nursing education programs in the United States, has run a series of seminars on the ethics of nursing practice. In addition, it has strongly recommended that ethics courses be introduced into the curricula which prepare our future nurses.

Last year, at the seventh annual conference on Nursing Law and Ethics (sponsored by Law-Medicine, Inc. and the Boston University School of Nursing), only one of four workshops — the one on Nursing Ethics — claimed the attention of more than one half the total number of conference attendants. (The other workshops were: Medications, Terminally-Ill Patients, and Future Directions in Nursing.) In July 1982, a four-day workshop on nursing and ethics was co-sponsored by the Westminister Institute for Ethics and Human Values and Law-Medicine, Inc. in London, Canada. And in June of that year, the first international congress on Nursing Law and Ethics was held in Jerusalem. In addition, several books on nursing ethics, written by nurses for nurses, made their appearance in 1983.

Yet, despite the lectures, conferences, articles, and books, only six baccalaureate nursing programs in the country have a requirement in bioethics and no associate degree nursing programs have one. In a survey conducted in 1977, 84 out of 86 respondents said that their only contact with ethical theory was through informal discussion of ethical problems which occurred in the course of their clinical nursing instruction, usually in their senior year.[8]

The lack of humanities education, and moral philosophy in particular, is a cause for concern for those in the profession. The following is the assessment of Margot Joan Fromer, a nurse writing for *Topics in Clinical Nursing:*

> The real tragedy with regard to ethical dilemmas in nursing practice is not that nurses do not recognize that such dilemmas exist; rather it is their lack of preparation to solve these dilemmas using ethical principles. Many see this as the fault of nursing education, which tends to minimize the importance of the humanities in general and moral philosophy in particular . . . With few exceptions, nurses do not care for clients *qua* physiological beings. They care for clients *qua* human beings . . . It is the study of the humanities that will tend to provide the foundation for dealing with clients as they present themselves to nurses — as whole human beings.[9]

The solution, as some members of the profession itself see the matter, is to introduce the study of philosophy into the nursing curriculum.

I would suggest that a particularly good place to start introducing the study of nursing ethics is in the nursing and philosophy curricula of community colleges. After 31 years of associate degree education for nurses, community college nursing programs in the United States now produce the largest number — almost 50 percent — of new nursing graduates. As of 1980 there were 707 associate degree nursing programs in the United States and approximately 343,747 registered nurses who had been graduated from them.[10] It is also likely that associate degree programs will prepare the largest number of practitioners in the years ahead.[11]

The introduction of nursing ethics into the curricula of these programs as well as into the humanities and philosophy curricula of undergraduate liberal arts programs (some of which already offer medical-ethics or bioethics courses) would clearly benefit future, and perhaps present, nurses. In addition, however, by drawing attention to the morally relevant and compelling features of the nurse's situation, the study of nursing ethics will enhance the moral sophistication of humanities students as well. In sum, this is what we who are educators need to do: to offer all students — those whose major is in the liberal arts as well as those who are concentrating in health-care studies — courses which will illuminate the ethics of decision-making in health-care contexts, which will clarify

the moral responsibilities and rights associated with specific health-care roles, and which, in so doing, will lead the student to a deep appreciation of what is important about moral relations generally and what is at the heart of moral philosophy itself.

Notes

[1]Jo Ann Ashley, *Hospitals, Paternalism, and the Role of the Nurse* (New York: Teachers College Press, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1976), 124.

[2]Robert Veatch, "Medicine, Biology, and Ethics," *The Hastings Center Report*, Special Supplement on the Teaching of Ethics, 7, no. 6 (December 1977) 1.

[3]Andrew Jameton, *Nursing Practice: The Ethical Issues* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall Inc., 1983), 178, 179.

[4]Mila Ann Aroskar, "Ethics in the Nursing Curriculum," *Nursing Outlook* 25, no. 4 (April 1977), 260-264.

[5]For work on the concept of virtue, see, for example, Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981); Philippa Foot, "Moral Beliefs," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 59 (1958-9), esp. 94-104; R.B. Brandt, "Traits of Character: A Conceptual Analysis," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 7 (1970).

[6]Mila Ann Aroskar, "The Fractured Image: The Public Stereotype of Nursing and the Nurse," *Nursing Images and Ideals: Opening Dialogue with the Humanities* (New York: Springer Publishing Company, 1980).

[7]Margot Joan Fromer, "Teaching Ethics by Case Analysis," *Nursing Outlook* 28, no. 11 (Nov. 1980), 604-609.

[8]Mila Ann Aroskar, "Ethics in the Nursing Curriculum," *Nursing Outlook* 25, no. 4 (April 1977), 260-264.

[9]"Solving Ethical Dilemmas in Nursing Practice," *Topics in Clinical Nursing* (April 1982), 20-21. See also Earl Shelp and Clara Ternes, "Moral Integrity for Nurses," *Nursing Law and Ethics* (Nov. 1980), 6.

[10]Council of Associate Degree Programs of the National League for Nursing, *Associate Degree News* 3, no. 4 (Oct. 1979); National League for Nursing Division of Research Data, *National League for Nursing Data Book* (New York: The League, 1980).

[11]Georgeen H. Dechow, "How Does the Associate Degree Nurse Fit Into the Health Care Delivery System Now and in the '80's?" Remarks delivered at Annual Meeting of the National League for Nursing Council Associate Degree Programs, Dallas, Texas, March 1972.

The Place of Literature in the English Curriculum: 1984 and After

Charles Moran

Poetry in the Making by Ted Hughes. London: Faber and Faber, 1969. 124 pp., $4.95.

Teaching the Art of Literature by Bruce Miller. Urbana, Illinois: NCTE, 1980. 138 pp., $5.50.

New Essays in the Teaching of Literature edited by David Mallick et. al. Urbana, Illinois: NCTE, 1982. 219 pp., $8.20.

Literature as Exploration by Louise M. Rosenblatt. Third Edition. New York: Noble and Noble, 1976. 304 pp., $4.20.

The most recent issue of the *ADE Bulletin*, a journal published by the Association of Departments of English, brings us bad news. In its annual writing and literature survey it discovers these facts: of the courses taught in English departments in American institutions of higher education, 60% are writing courses, and fewer than one-third are literature courses. Seventy-seven percent of the surveyed institutions require a writing course; only 32% require a literature course. Only nine institutions have experienced a decrease in their writing enrollments over the past five years; 168 have experienced a significant increase. Literature enrollment has declined in both two- and four-year colleges. The authors of the survey put it as directly as it can be put: "These figures present further evidence that English departments are changing, that the emphasis upon writing courses is increasing, and that the emphasis upon literature is decreasing." The authors find "soft" evidence that the English major itself is changing, including in its domain more writing and less literature. If the English major becomes a writing major, this change will further cut into the teaching of literature in post-secondary education.

What the ADE survey does not discover is the extent to which writing has driven literature out of the freshman composition course. It is clear that this is happening, as the "prose models" approach to composition loses favor and the cause-effect relationship between the reading of literature and the production of good writing becomes less clear to most of us. My own career as a teacher of

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post-secondary English is typical, I believe. When I began teaching freshman English at Brown University some twenty years ago, the course I was given was a course in literature: a study of the development of the essay in English. We read Sir Thomas Browne and Carlyle and Ruskin and Nabokov. We even bootlegged some poetry and fiction. The freshman English course I now teach at the University of Massachusetts takes its form from the "craft" model developed and articulated by practitioners such as Donald Murray, Roger Garrison, and Peter Elbow. This freshman composition course includes no literature at all. At the center of the course is the students' own writing. That the course is given by the English department is, from our perspective, a happy accident. The freshman writing course could just as well be a non-departmental subject, as it is at many fine institutions, taught outside the English department by writing specialists.

So it seems that the teaching of literature is in a bad way. And when we look for help or leadership, we find that the voices raised are raised by professors of English literature who lack credibility because they speak of and from their own experience, as they must. When an English teacher tells you that literature is powerful stuff, should you believe that teacher? We find that whatever claims we may make for the value of literature are claims that we cannot support. There is simply no evidence, no facts that can undergird our case. We are haunted by the crimes committed by the highly literate group that operated the death-camps of Nazi Germany. Does literature make people better?

There is, in fact, no solid ground to stand on. And yet there never is, finally, in matters of curriculum. It cannot be demonstrated that the advent of business education has improved the performance of American business to any perceptible degree. Indeed, we could argue that the proliferation of business courses in higher education has accompanied, if not caused, the decline in the caliber of American business. Our steel and automobile industries are in deep trouble, and even the new semi-conductor industry seems about to slip into better hands than ours. What good, what use, what value is there in business education? None, that we can demonstrate. And yet business education expands in the curriculum. We have to understand, we teachers of literature, that curriculum is a soft structure, one that takes the shape of the society that both contains and creates it. What most of us believe in will be taught; what most of us do not believe in will not be taught. We will resist change, because we have accumulated tremendous capital. Those of us who are veterans have an investment in the novels, poems, and plays that we have taught and have come to know, at least, and perhaps love. We will not give up this investment easily. But we know that change is occurring, and that it will continue to occur. The prescribed, formal inclusion of English literature into the American curriculum occurred in 1894. We are not, it appears, eternal. We may expect some

temporary relief from inflation-fueled nostalgia, as the popularity of golden oldies of all kinds rises in our culture. And the demographic changes already in place may make it possible for the newly-powerful old to dictate curriculum to the disenfranchised young. But aside from these rather frightening possibilities, the curriculum of the future is not likely to be the curriculum of the past, and English, which has had a relatively short history, will continue to evolve.

Given all of the above, it is clear that we are at a critical moment in the history of our profession. We can throw up our hands and re-train, simply giving up the teaching of what we best love to teach; or we can look hard at our professional literature for what may be alternatives. In the following pages I offer a reading list: a report of a recent conference on literature, and three books that describe rather different approaches to the teaching of literature. *New Essays in the Teaching of Literature* is a summary of the proceedings of the Literature Commission at the Third International Conference on the Teaching of English, held in Sydney, Australia in 1980. This summary is a good means of locating us in our professional present. In this book we find in close quarters the profession's hopes, fears, and self-doubts, and hints of new directions. The three guidebooks offer approaches to literature that are alternatives to the "heritage" and "New Critical" or "formalist" approaches now in disfavor. Louise Rosenblatt's *Literature and Exploration* is the most lucid, and earliest, statement of what has been called the "reader-response" approach to the teaching of literature; Bruce Miller's *Teaching the Art of Literature* sees literature as an art and its teaching as as aspect of aesthetic education; and Ted Hughes's *Poetry in the Making* offers the "craft" approach: a writer talks to students about writing literature.

New Essays in the Teaching of Literature is the summary and report of what I will call "the Sydney Conference." Over 150 delegates from eight countries—England, the United States, Canada, South Africa, India, China, New Zealand, and Australia—came together for five days of seminars, lectures, and discussion. The conference was not issue-based and deductive in design, but experience-based and inductive. The participants—teachers from all levels of primary, secondary, and (the British phrase) "tertiary" education, read a short story, Graham Greene's "I Spy," and poems by Howard Nemerov, Ted Hughes, and Robert Graves. From the experience of reading and discussing these works, it was hoped that the participants would reach a consensus on issues of pedagogy. On the morning of the first day the participants were divided into groups, and the groups read and discussed Ted Hughes's "February" and Howard Nemerov's "The Companions." They were given this instruction: "Each group will work on an interpretation of the poems. Each group will decide how it will choose to read the poems and what kinds of presentation could do justice to the interpretations." In the afternoon the groups were given Robert

Graves's "Welsh Incident" and this instruction: "How can each group realize the poem in performance in order to do justice to its meaning?" On the second day the materials were Graham Greene's "I Spy" and transcripts of their own teaching of this story that the delegates had brought with them to the conference. The story and the delegates' transcripts became ballast for the groups' attempts to wrestle with this question: "If we can agree that the best reading involves a creative-critical response, what is there in our teaching that can inhibit or facilitate that response?"

Out of all this activity there came a clear consensus. David Mallick distilled these five points of agreement from the tapes of the proceedings:

1) teachers must not see their role as one of giving information about literature or one of imposing literary judgments on students;

2) it is imperative that teachers see the personal response of the reader as being all-important in the development of literary judgment;

3) there must always be attempts to link the reading with the students' experiences and concerns;

4) reading is a creative activity in which the poem is recreated in the minds of the readers; and

5) there is no necessary dichotomy between the creative and the critical (191).

Mallick goes on to say that these statements are not new, that they are even a bit tired. And I suppose that he is right. But the conference gadfly, Geoffrey Summerfield, argues in his essay that there was a deep chasm between what the delegates were saying and what they were doing as they approached the assigned pieces of literature. Their stated concern for the students' response to literature was contradicted by the ways in which they were approaching the literature that had been "assigned" to them. "Was not the distinctive power of [Ted Hughes's] 'February' dissipated by all the talk, the exegeses, the exchanges?" What, Summerfield asks, had happened to the poem? "With the best will in the world, we were conducting ourselves as dutiful students, busily 'unpacking' the poem, peeling away, performing the task that our 'English teacher' had set us. Our ratiocinations were subtle; our minds were strenuously and finely tuned; our manners, in listening to one another, were above reproach. But we had, on the whole, for the most part, missed the boat."

The essays in this volume are an eloquent record of teachers' struggles with the new, process-based, response-based orthodoxy. Some, like Summerfield, find useful solutions; others seem to find intractable, but interesting, problems. All but a few, interestingly enough, assume the hegemony of writing, despite the post-McLuhan pessimism that reigned in some quarters. One of the essays deserves special notice: Ian Reid's "Beyond English and the Classroom," a

description of the literature curriculum at Deakin University. Deakin has no English department at all, but a literature area. There are no classes as such, but study guides, written, insofar as possible, in the interrogative mode. Deakin students keep a notebook which is described in the study guide in this way:

> Think of it as combining the functions of resource file, personal journal, drawing board, work bench, tool kit, fellow student . . . It can include, if you like, quite informal or intimate diary entries, because you will not be required to submit the whole thing for assessment. But it should in any case be the focus of your own day-to-day responses to the course. Throughout the year you will be encouraged to make a record of what you think about what you read, and to develop some of these reactions into creative writing, formal essays, and so forth. In this way the notebook should generate most of your written work. (147-148)

Students at Deakin write creatively as an adjunct to their study of literature. They are employed in the making of literature as well as in the activities we generally associate with the literature classroom: response, analysis, assessment. The Deakin curriculum reminds me of the place of literature in higher education in the 1890's and earlier: an extra-curricular activity sponsored by literary and debating societies not directly connected with the college or university. Is the Deakin experiment a distant, early warning of the impending disestablishment of literary studies? Perhaps so. It is, at the least, the inevitable result of the assumption, articulated by a number of participants, that the poem, novel, or play should be left to do its own work. If reader response is brought into the center of the classroom, then what is the teacher's role in that classroom? Simply enthusiast and cheerleader?

Louise Rosenblatt's *Literature as Exploration* is the best light to guide us out of the darkness just visited. Her book, first published in 1938 and re-issued in substantially the same form in 1976, is still the best working-out of the pedagogical implications of reader-response approach to literature. I will suggest three companion texts: her second book, *The Reader, The Text, The Poem* (1978), which has more to do with literary theory than with pedagogical practice; an anthology entitled *Reader Response Criticism*, edited by Jane Tompkins (1980); and Frank Lentriccia's *After the New Criticism* (1980), a survey of, and commentary on, what its author calls "the richest and most confusing [period] in our critical history." These three books will, if you have the time, give you a more detailed picture of the field. But if you have to choose one book, *Literature as Exploration* is the best and most applicable to our pedagogy.

Let me illustrate the book's potential value to us as teachers of literature with this anecdote—a "true story." When our son was twelve, he read Peter

Benchley's novel *Jaws*, which was then at the top of the best-seller lists. He lived the book so intensely that he would not go swimming for months afterward. Because the book was underfoot, and because it had had such an effect on our son, I read it—and hated it. I could hardly bring myself to read beyond the first few pages. I read on, rapidly, skimming, rushing on to the end, reading not for pleasure but to discover what it was that had so profoundly affected our son. What to do with the difference between my response and his? And that of hundreds of thousands of other adult readers who had made this book a best seller? Before my reading of *Literature as Exploration* I would have been forced to believe that my response was superior to that of this multitude of others who, either because they were young or because they were untrained, were unable to read the work as it should be read. I would have believed, with D.W. Harding and I. A. Richards, that there is a single, good reading of the novel and that it was my duty as a critic to steer readers toward that good response. Our son would have become, in my mind, a "young, untutored reader." The mass of adult readers would have become "readers who should know better."

My reading of *Literature as Exploration* sent me on a different and much more fruitful track. I examined my response. Why had I disliked the book? Why after the first few paragraphs had I begun to skim? A close look at the first few paragraphs discovered the cause. I had been unable to visualize the setting of the opening scene because the writer had not been consistent in his painting of the scene: the point of view had moved in some impossible ways, and the lighting wasn't right: the beach was brightly lit on a moonless, dark night. Furthermore, a man who was stumbling-drunk "scampered" down a long set of stairs. Stumble-drunks don't scamper. Now why did I notice all the faults? Because, I began to think, I did not want to read romance. I was, at this particular point in my life, reading to learn—to discover more about men, women, love, and so forth. I felt that a ripping good story was not what I needed or wanted. I had been reading Henry James, whose fiction implicates its readers in judgment of character and action. *Jaws* was simply fantasy of a particular kind: the night sea-journey; the monster in the deep; the beast eats the beauty, or the sacrificial princess. So I was impatient at the outset, and the poor craftsmanship of the novel pushed me beyond my threshold of tolerance. Our son, on the other hand, at a different stage of life and with other needs than mine, fell into the tale uncritically. The novel had a deep and profound effect on him. Now, at age seventeen, he still remembers his reading of *Jaws*.

With Louise Rosenblatt as my guide, I did not tell my son, or others, that *Jaws* was trash. I did tell them that, given my own training and background, and given my present situation in life—family, station-wagon, career—I am not able to read the book. Other backgrounds and situations are entirely possible. Indeed there are times when I need absolute escape, and had I chanced on *Jaws*

at one of those times, my experience of the book might have been completely different. The reader-response paradigm allowed me to take myself seriously as a reader, and to take seriously also others who read differently. If I had remained in the "cultural heritage" paradigm, I would have had to say, "No, O people. This novel is not part of that entity 'literature,' which is the best that has been thought and said by our species during its history on this earth. This novel," I would have to say, "is trash. Don't read it." If I had remained in the new critical paradigm, I would have seen *Jaws* as a work that was not fully realized. Those who thought it good did so because the text elicited from them stock, and invalid, responses. If they liked the book, they were not reading the book but were off in some world of their own. The reader-response paradigm allowed me to treat both the text and our responses to the text as the subject of inquiry. Why had I responded as I had? How do other people respond, and why do they respond as they do? I can try to understand my own reaction by looking at myself, my situation in life, my past, and my training. I can try to understand others' responses in the same way. In the process of this analysis, I grant both to myself and to other readers their own power and value. I do not have to consign them to the circle of "misguided and immature readers."

Reading in the way suggested by *Literature as Exploration* frees us from difficulty; it enables us to do much that we could not do before. But the "much" that becomes possible also requires something of us. If we are to bring our students' responses to literature into the center of our classes, we have become, whether we like it or not, lay social scientists—historians, sociologists, psychologists, anthropologists—in some degree. Louise Rosenblatt puts it this way: "Teachers of literature deal inevitably with its human implications. Must they then become experts in the social sciences? The answer obviously is, No. But they are responsible for scrutinizing their own assumptions about human nature and society in the light of contemporary thought."

Rosenblatt gives us a most helpful head start in the direction she indicates in her chapters entitled "Some Basic Social Concepts," "Personality," and "Emotion and Reason." If my daughter's reaction to *Jaws* was cool, as indeed it was, what was the cause of this response? She didn't like the sex, and she didn't like the way the shark ate the woman. This response would lead us, in a college classroom, to a look at how women were portrayed in *Jaws* and, perhaps by extension, in the genre romance generally, and more particularly in the American romance. Beginning with the reader's response and building on it in the ways Rosenblatt suggests can lead to the traditionally accepted benefits of the humanities: a fuller understanding of the self both in itself and in its relationship to other selves and to social and cultural structures. In a literature classroom based upon Rosenblatt's principles, the student does not sit as spectator, watching the teacher read. The student is a reader, engaged in an

activity and exploring the character of that activity. Here is Rosenblatt's summary of the process she has described:

> The teaching process outlined consists in helping the student to develop the habit of reflecting upon his primary response to books. Having given him the essential opportunity to react freely, the teacher then seeks to create a situation in which the student becomes aware of possible alternative responses and is led to examine further both his own reaction and the text itself. In this way he is helped to understand his own preoccupations and assumptions better. He considers whether he has taken into account everything that the text offered. He thus becomes more aware of the various verbal 'clues' — the diction, the rhythmic pattern, structure, and symbol — and develops or deepens his understanding of concepts such as voice, persona, point of view, genre. This process of reflection leads the student to seek additional information concerning the work, the author, and their social setting, as a basis for understanding of himself and of literature. These new technical, personal, and social insights may ultimately lead to a revision of his original interpretation and judgment and may improve his equipment for future response to literature. (224-225)

This is a tall order for the literature teacher. But it is a route that many have taken since the publication of Rosenblatt's book. If the consensus reached by the Sydney conference holds, the process-oriented reader-response approach to literature will be the new orthodoxy.

An entirely diffetent book, more old-fashioned in many ways but still important, is Bruce Miller's *Teaching the Art of Literature*. Miller considers literature to be an art, and its artifacts art objects, in the same category as particular paintings or pieces of sculpture. Like Rosenblatt he places the reader's response to the art object at the center of his pedagogy. But his agreement with Rosenblatt and the consensus of the Sydney Conference ends here. Miller believes that readers need to be systematically prepared for their first encounter with a work of art; Rosenblatt and the participants at the Sydney Conference believe that students require a first, free reading, one not conditioned by prior activities. Rosenblatt's metaphor for the teacher is the coach who coaches activity already in progress; Miller's is the experienced elder who initiates the young and untrained into the mysteries of the discipline.

Miller's approach derives from the traditional art-appreciation or music-appreciation course, one in which the artifacts are presented to the students through the teacher. The teacher's performance as critic occupies the center of

the stage. The teacher is doing it right; students will come to do so as well, by example. Miller assumes that the appreciation of literature is, like driving an automobile (his analogy, not mine), a learned skill. In this way, Miller solves the problem agonized over by the Sydney conferees: if the encounter between student and literary work is the center of the literature classroom, what should the literature teacher be doing? I'm not sure that I like his solution, but it is less difficult to implement than Rosenblatt's, and closer to what we now do. If we question Miller's art-appreciation model, we need to question as well the conventional music-appreciation and art-appreciation courses, which I, for one, found stimulating and useful.

Miller assumes that students know the beautiful when they see it, but that they have to be brought to see it. He offers us full programs for teaching three works of literatue: Keats's "To Autumn," Cather's "Paul's Case," and Shakespeare's *Othello*. Each program includes what Miller calls "preliminary readiness work." The teacher prepares the students to read the work, and after that preparation is complete, the reading may take place. The "preliminary readiness work" for "To Autumn" includes slides of the English landscape near Winchester, an explanation of cider-manufacture, and an explanation of threshing practices in 19th-century English farming. "Once the difficulties that might impede the students' response to the poem have been cleared out of the way, they can be assigned to attempt reading the poem on their own." As they read, however, their reading is directed by advice that is sometimes good, sometimes bad. Here's a piece of what seems to me to be bad advice: "As a stimulus the teacher can tell them that the two lines

> While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
> And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;

convey a clear-enough picture that they should be able to draw it, and that the different drawings should look pretty much alike." Now I could no more draw a stubble-plain than I could fly unassisted to the moon. And particularly I could not draw a stubble plain that had been touched with rosy hue by barred clouds. The image is not one that can be drawn, really, because it contains no lines or boundaries. There is a definite blurring of lines: clouds touch, they "bloom," the day. Here I find the limitation of Miller's pedagogy: it does not allow me to inhabit the poem myself. I lie outside the poem, clearly incompetent because I cannot draw, or visualize, as I am required to do.

At his best, Miller is attempting to help his students read the poem as they would if they were 19th-century British citizens—a leap of imagination that Stanley Fish, for one, says can not occur and should not be attempted. And yet one of the recurrent claims for the value of literature is its capacity to project us into different minds, cultures, and times. Is it the case that "To Autumn" can

best be read by persons with particular experience? Must we have heard the nightingale to appreciate Keats's ode? Or is it the case that readers who bring different kinds of experience to the poem will find different and equally valuable poems?

When we place literature in the category of "the arts," we discover an interesting difficulty. Relative to the other arts, literature has a special place in the curriculum still, despite the reverses of the past ten years. Miller argues persuasively for the inclusion of aesthetic education in the curriculum, but it is clear to him as it is to us that aesthetic education does not require literature; it requires art objects of whatever kind. Literature is, however, by default, the only art form that is taught at "anything like an adult level of appreciation." The curriculum should teach the other arts, but it does not. Because English is the only place where aesthetic education can and will take place, the English teacher is obliged to carry the flame alone. Once again, as so often in its brief and chequered history, English is being asked to do something that needs to be done but can't be done anywhere else.

Despite the difficulties, thinking of literature as an art opens some doors. As I was reading toward this review, I came to W.B. Yeats's lyric, "When You Are Old," in the midst of Miller's book. I had been trying to keep straight Miller's categories of approach to literature—ostensive, extrinsic, intrinsic—and I stopped to read the poem, aloud, to myself. That experience was absolutely different from my previous reading of perfectly good prose. The poem was an experience—which is Miller's deepest assumption. Literature is "event-object-meaning" which one experiences. "It is the actual reading of single, separate works that is the good thing, not the digesting of works into our general fund of information, not even the growth in our skill to read more works. It is the particular poem or play or story that is good and does good; everything else is secondary."

The third guidebook that I have chosen to review is Ted Hughes's *Poetry in the Making*, an anthology of poems and programs from the BBC series, "Listening and Writing." The book is addressed to children and teachers of children, but it could easily be a teacher's guide to a college-level "Introduction to Literature" course. It suffers a bit from its translation to American shores, for we may not know, or need to know, what *plasticine* is, and our weather, outside of New England, is not the "infinitely changing" entity that the poet assumes. Nevertheless, *Poetry in the Making* is an important book that "teaches" literature not as occasion for a response or as art object but as the product of the writer's craft.

It has long seemed to me and to many others that the lines between creative writing, literary criticism, and expository writing have been too sharply drawn.

Student and teacher alike suffer from the tripartite division of English departments into Freshman writing programs, literature programs, and creative writing programs. A book like Ted Hughes's *Poetry in the Making* reminds us that we could combine writing and the study of writing. When we did so, we might just become critics of a rather fine and perceptive kind, readers with a direct and experiential understanding of what "goes in" a text. In *Teaching the Art of Literature*, Bruce Miller spoke of "the risky assumption that performance leads to appreciation." Certainly performance can enhance appreciation. Anyone who has sung a Bach cantata has acquired a knowledge of Bach that will enhance "appreciation." Ian Reid put it this way at the Sydney conference: "They [the students] are able to experience the process of literary creation from the inside. And they are learning that criticism and creation go hand in hand, that good reading and good writing are two sides of the same coin." Peter Moss, also at Sydney, issued this warning to us all: that our students must be makers as well as students if the culture is to remain whole. "Educational institutions must open up private worlds, through the encouragement of Personal Narratives, in order to insure that the community makes culture. Without the Private Voice Education and Culture lose in humanity."

Poetry in the Making is a program for writing poems of several kinds and, amazingly enough, at least the beginnings of a novel. Hughes asks his readers/listeners/students to write about animals, about wind and weather, about people, about landscapes, about relatives, and about moon creatures. What he does is much less important than how he does what he does, and the how can best be illustrated by an extended sample or two. Most writing texts have a section called "finding a subject" or "narrowing your subject." Here is Hughes dealing with the same subject in his chapter "Learning to Think":

> There is the inner life, which is the world of final reality, the world of memory, emotion, imagination, intelligence, and natural common sense, and which goes on all the time, consciously or unconsciously, like the heartbeat. There is also the thinking process by which we break into that inner life and capture answers and evidence to support the answers out of it. That process or raid, or persuasion, or ambush, or dogged hunting, or surrender, is the kind of thinking we have to learn and if we do not learn it, then our minds lie in us like the fish in the pond of a man who cannot fish.
>
> Now you see the kind of thinking I am talking about. Perhaps I ought not to call it thinking at all—it is just that we tend to call everything that goes on in our heads thinking. I am talking about whatever kind of trick or skill it is that enables us to catch those elusive or shadowy thoughts, and collect them together, and hold them still so we can get a really good look at them. (57-58)

Hughes includes advice to the teacher in sections that are headed "Notes." These notes are direct and at times almost brutal. Their intent is clear and positive: to prevent the teacher from interfering with the student writer's progress. Here is Hughes's note appended to the chapter, "Writing About People":

> In writing imaginatively about people a pupil should be given complete license. Much has been said about the therapeutic value of uninhibited writing, and though no doubt that can go to the point where mere confusion enters, it is one way of talking about the pleasures and the healing effects of reading and writing poetry.
>
> All imaginative writing is to some extent the voice of what is neglected or forbidden, hence its connection with the past in a nostalgic vein and the future in a revolutionary vein. Hence, too, its connection with the old Adam, with volcanoes, world-endings, monstrous outrages, etc. So when an English teacher invites from his pupils imaginative disclosures about people, he generally has School tradition against him. But there ought to be plenty of room within easily permitted things for plenty of interesting work.
>
> Nevertheless, the imagination likes a wide open field of action, fifteen minutes of license and immunity. If the teacher cannot somehow provide this, he should not expect that much nerve from his pupils. (50-51)

Among the delights of this book are Hughes's elliptical and poetic prose and his evident faith in the capacity of the beginning writer to achieve something that is not, almost certainly, poetry, but something that is admirable and, after all, close enough. *Poetry in the Making* reminds us that in the teaching of literature, the writer's voice must be heard. Ted Hughes's book accomplishes for the teaching of literature what the work of Donald Murray has accomplished for the teaching of freshman composition. Both Murray and Hughes are writers teaching writing.

So there you have it: a look at the present, and a look at three possible directions for the future. We can, with Louise Rosenblatt and the reader-response critics, bring the students' responses to literature into the center of our teaching. We can, with Bruce Miller, look at literature as one of the fine arts and see ourselves as instructors in an essentially aesthetic enterprise, teachers of "literature appreciation" courses. Or we can, with Ted Hughes, come at literature from the perspective of the writer. This last alternative has the greatest appeal to me. The "cultural heritage" model seems dead, because we can no longer agree on the particulars of the heritage. The analytical model is currently,

and perhaps permanently, out of favor. It would be ironic if literature's return to the classroom happened through the agency of writing instruction. That is, after all, where it all began.

Education in America: Changing Times and New Beginnings

Myron A. Marty

The Troubled Crusade: American Education 1945-1980, by Diane Ravitch. New York: Basic Books, 1983. 384 pp., $19.95.

A Place Called School: Prospects for the Future, by John I. Goodlad. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1983. 396 pp., $18.95.

High School: A Report on Secondary Education in America, by Ernest L. Boyer. New York: Harper and Row, 1983. 363 pp., $15.00.

The State of the Nation and the Agenda for Higher Education, by Howard R. Bowen. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1982. 212 pp., $15.95.

The earliest years of childhood, we are told, are the most influential in establishing a child's character and values. By the age of five or six, heredity, the family, and the larger social environment presumably have set a direction for a child's life; to change it requires extraordinary efforts. This is a discouraging discovery, of course, for parents and teachers of children who have passed the age of seven.

Perhaps it is the same with institutions. They are shaped in their early years by the ideas, exertions, and values of those who lead them and by prevailing social conditions. By the time they are seven years old, they are set in their ways. To reshape them is a monumental undertaking. Even to think about reshaping them demands courage. To propose change may be heretical.

But there are times when circumstances compel us to set some distance between ourselves and the institutions we know best and, with the benefit of a different perspective, to examine their purposes and scrutinize their character—not as an intellectual exercise, but to determine whether their purposes need redefining and their character reshaping. And what if they do?

At the moment, the nation's attention is fixed on elementary and secondary schools as institutions crying for scrutiny and renewal. The media report

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debates over disciplinary problems, the causes of declining achievement test scores, curricular requirements, teachers' salaries, the preparation and certification of teachers, effective use of educational technology, school-funding formulas, voucher plans and tax credits for private school tuition, and so on.

Contributing to the debates, and in some respects instigating them, are the report of the National Commission on Excellence and a number of compelling books on schools and school problems. Although no one will be satisfied with every element in the Commission's report, *A Nation at Risk* (U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20506, $4.50), it should nonetheless be widely read, particularly by those in a position to play a part in efforts to make schools more effective. Similarly, several of the books on schools deserve careful attention by all who are in the business of educating the nation's children and youth.

Those who work in community colleges have a particular obligation to join forces with those who are seeking to achieve school improvement, for four principal reasons: a) the deficiencies of schools cited in the books and the Commission's report unquestionably extend into community colleges; b) community colleges face the task of educating those who are disabled by their failure to learn what they should have learned in the schools—why else the compelling need for remedial programs? c) the nature and purpose of community colleges—particularly as they are reflected in open-door policies, in amorphous admission and degree requirements for some programs, and in loose standards in individual courses—have contributed at least indirectly to the inability of schools to impose demands on their students; and d) the social circumstances that affect the operation of schools have similar effects on community colleges.

* * * *

One of the recent books, *The Troubled Crusade: American Education 1945-1980*, by Diane Ravitch, is particularly useful in reaching an understanding of community colleges and their place in American education, for it describes and analyzes the educational scene in the United States during the years when nearly 900 community colleges were being formed and several hundred more were being re-formed out of junior colleges. It is an account of a crusade against ignorance—a crusade carried on by men and women of intelligence, courage, good will, and the best of intentions. Ravitch, a perceptive observer and sensitive analyst, explains in *The Troubled Crusade* why, in recent decades at least, their failures have overshadowed their successes.

Her explanation begins with an account of initiatives in the post-war years to improve educational institutions at all levels. Complicating the task for colleges and universities were the tidal wave of veterans enrolling under the G.I.

Bill and the questions their enrollment raised about opening educational opportunities to larger segments of the population. Among the solutions proposed by President Truman's Commission on Higher Education in 1948 was for state planners to prepare for a rapid expansion of two-year community colleges, which would "fit into the community life as the high school has done" (16). Schools, meanwhile, were forced to come to terms with the legacy of the progressive education movement that had subtly influenced their programs and practices in preceding decades.

Ravitch's account of the rise and fall of progressive education, the best part of the book, outlines the issues that have in one way or another bedeviled educators for half a century. Progressive education, she contends, "was an attitude, a belief in experimentation, a commitment to the education of all children and to democracy in school." Progressive educators rejected, among other things, the belief that schools should above all improve the intellectual functioning of children, that the nation's cultural heritage should be stressed, that traditional subjects should be taught and their contents mastered, and that the teacher should dominate the classroom. They emphasized, in contrast, experience and projects, rather than reading and writing, as the better way to learn, cooperative planning of school activities by teachers and students, and the accomplishment of "effective living" rather than acquisition of knowledge (44). Not all of the progressives' concerns were misguided—who can argue with the need to recognize individual differences in children's abilities and interests?—but the overall effect of the movement's efforts was to give ignorance new definitions, to turn the crusade against ignorance in new directions, and thus to move schools away from their traditional purposes.

Anyone familiar with the character of community colleges can find the imprint of progressive education on it. How else to account for the fact that so few community colleges see it as a major part of their mission to help students in all programs improve their intellectual functioning, to emphasize the nation's cultural heritage, and to teach traditional subjects with an insistence on mastery of their content? There are individuals and programs in community colleges dedicated to these ends, of course, but would anyone argue that these ends are central to the actual mission of community colleges, or that they touch the majority of community college students? If so, how is it possible that so many men and women leave community colleges with scarcely more than token experiences committed to achieving them? If progressive education moved schools away from their traditional purposes, as Ravitch contends, community colleges have felt no particular need to recover those purposes in their central mission.

Ravitch explains, of course, that progressive education brought forth effective critics in the early 1950s. Unfortunately, as she also shows, they were

joined by many who made the schools their targets for political reasons. In the end, she writes, "it was not the schools that attracted the attackers, it was the attackers that sought out the schools" (113). Ravitch's account of the loyalty investigations prompted by the actions of the politically-inspired critics as well as by fears of Communist influence in colleges and universities is admirable for its balance and useful for its implicit warning that the motives of school critics should be assessed before one joins forces with them. Also commendable is her analysis of the protracted debate over federal aid to education as it was exacerbated by worries over matters of separation of church and state.

Before all of these issues were resolved, new ones erupted as a consequence of the school desegration decision in 1954. Still more were inspired by court-mandated plans to accomplish school integration even if this meant the establishment of quotas by race and the use of busing to reach them. Before long, legal questions, many of them turning on evidence drawn from the social sciences, claimed center stage, as the issue of equality of opportunity in the schools crowded aside concerns for educational achievement. The time was right, too, for "reformers, radicals, and romantics" to make some gains as they advocated an array of ideas for improving schools or, alternatively, for "deschooling" society. While this was occurring, colleges and universities were torn apart by battles over free speech and the Vietnam war, and racial strife contributed further to campus disorders. It is no wonder, then, that a "new politics of education" took shape and that questions of school quality were lost in the din of political controversies.

The Troubled Crusade is notable for its lucid style and broad coverage, but its most striking features are its lack of ideological heavyhandedness and its informed optimism. Rebukes to the misguided are offered gently and with a genuine historical understanding that is lacking in the writings of so many school critics. Implicit throughout is the recognition that in this crusade, as in so many others, the causes of the problems we face today lie in faulty solutions tried earlier.

* * * *

While *The Troubled Crusade* establishes the importance of having a sound basis for making decisions about new directions for schools and colleges, two recent books provide just such a basis. The first is *A Place Called School: Prospects for the Future*, by John I. Goodlad. The book is a summary report on "A Study of Schooling," a massive, eight-year investigation supported by a dozen foundations, along with the National Institute of Education and the U.S. Office of Education. The investigation sent observers into 1,016 classrooms in 38 elementary and secondary schools. Teams of researchers interviewed 1,350 teachers, nearly 9,000 parents, and more than 17,000 students. Much of what

they learned confirms the conventional wisdom, but they also turned up some facts and impressions which contradict it.

Commenting on facts and impressions of the latter sort, Goodlad writes: "The apparent assumption that teachers and students only had to concentrate on the 3 Rs and try harder in order for all to be well is a familiar one. But it ignored an array of conditions surrounding the conduct of schooling which, if not entirely new, were far more intense and widespread than was recognized" (7). That assertion, buttressed by a discussion of seven sets of contemporary conditions that make schooling more difficult than in the past, gets Goodlad off to a fine start with thoughtful people who are appalled by the simplistic prescriptions for school improvement that abound today. The two main themes that pervade the book also give it credibility. In the first, Goodlad stresses that the school as a system of interacting parts must be seen as the unit for improvement and that concentrating on teachers, or principals, or the curriculum, is insufficient. In the second, he maintains that "our schools will get better and have continuing good health only to the degree that a significant proportion of our people, not just parents, care about them" (32).

A Place Called School is particularly useful to community college educators wishing to have a detailed analysis of what goes on in high school classrooms—the rooms that have conditioned their students for college experiences. Goodlad explores the make-up of school curricula, the quality of instructional materials and facilities, the attitudes of students and parents toward what goes on in school, and methods used by teachers. On methods of teaching, he admits to discouragement. How would he react as an adult to the ways of teachers he and his fellow researchers observed? "I would groan audibly over still another seatwork assignment. My mind would wander off soon after the beginning of the lecture. It would be necessary for me to put my mind in some kind of 'hold' position. This is what students do" (233). No wonder students are so well practiced in such behavior by the time they reach college classrooms.

How valid are Goodlad's generalizations regarding schools and the problem of improving them? His starting point is indisputable: "*Schools* differ; *schooling* is everywhere very much the same" (264). They are made the same by what he calls "the regularities of schooling"—the conditions and practices one finds in school after school. For schooling to improve, these regularities must be altered, and for that to happen, "a critical mass of persons and groups constituting our society must first see the need" (269). But seeing the need is not enough. Goodlad observes that "the 'obvious' and 'logical' solutions to the schools' curricular inadequacies being bandied about today are those that were most frequently bandied about yesterday and the day before that. Essentially, they involve a get tough approach combined with a dose of elitism" (291).

The measures Goodlad proposes are more complex than that. They are

also well-conceived, and therein lies a valuable feature of this book for community college educators. Because the regularities of schooling of which he writes continue into community colleges, the problems he identifies and the proposals he offers for changing them suggest possibilities for changing the similar regularities in community colleges.

These proposals do not lend themselves to easy summary, but mentioning some of them will give one a flavor of the book. Observing that, as children pass through the grades, the variety of learning experiences offered them diminishes and teacher talking increases—a natural development as the subjects of learning shift from the concrete to the abstract, he warns against trends that could make things worse for students. A current misunderstanding about the improvement of pedagogy, he says, "is that teachers simply need to learn to do better what they are doing now." While teachers must excell at lecturing and questioning students, "providing inducements for improving only these limited aspects of teaching is to reinforce what already is grossly in excess" (231-232)."

He warns, too, against a single-minded concentration on improving children's abilities to read, write, and handle arithmetical operations. To stress this goal alone means that current methods of lecturing, questioning, monitoring seatwork, and testing, along with the present materials of instruction will continue to prevail. School improvement as measured by standardized achievement tests may be apparent, but the quality of education in schools quite conceivably could be worse—"more boring, less fun, more repetitious, still fewer encounters with significant intellectual problems, even more siphoning of nonacademic students into vocational training, and fewer experiences with the arts" (244)." Nonetheless, he says, the nation's teachers will have responded to what they hear. In other words, if the folks want a bust-em-by-God-in-the-head approach to teaching the ABC's, that's what the teachers will give them. And not much more.

Do we want something more, as our idealistic statements about the purposes of schools often assert? Something better? If so,

> . . . we will be confronted with the need to involve students in a variety of ways of thinking, to introduce students to concepts and not just facts, to provide situations that provoke and evoke curiosity, to develop in students concern for one's own performance in work and the satisfaction of meeting one's own standards, to cultivate appreciation of others through cooperative endeavors, and to be concerned about the traits of mind and character fostered in schools. No longer will it be sufficient to teach some facts of geography, a little algebra, or the mechanics of language. The school subjects will become means for learnings that transcend them. (244)

But Goodlad is not sure that this is what we want, even as we protest that it is, for

> . . . we have not fully considered the implications of the grand phrases. How many creative thinkers do businesses need? What kind of nation is one awash with autonomous individuals? How many artists and museums can we afford? We are a nation predominantly oriented to the instrumental values of education. If more schooling does not assure a better job, what good is it? (244)

That is a tough question, and I shall address it later in this essay.

Other of Goodlad's proposals deal with more specific matters, such as striking a balance between state and local responsibility for school management, achieving balanced curricula, teaching students to develop ways of thinking and drawing connections between the subjects they study, coping with individual differences, reorganizing schools for more effective management, improving teacher education, forming partnerships between schools and other social agencies and institutions, and rethinking the continuum of schooling—with an earlier beginning and the addition of a fourth phase, one that combines work, study, and service within an educational ethos and is possibly based in community colleges.

Although *A Place Called School* lacks literary luster, it is loaded with the kind of facts and insights that ought to be part of the working knowledge of all educators at every level. It is the book that provides the best starting point for persons genuinely interested in re-forming schools, and by extension, colleges. For community college leaders, it provides a perspective on their institutions that should not be ignored.

* * * *

Like *A Place Called School*, Ernest Boyer's *High School: A Report on Secondary Education in America* brims with facts and figures gathered by observers working with its author. It makes use also of the findings assembled by other investigators, including Goodlad's "A Study of Schooling." Besides being limited to secondary education, it differs from Goodlad's book primarily in the specificity of its recommendations. Not only are they specific, they are plentiful as well, almost to the point of seeming to be a wish list. But that is not to the book's discredit, for its author knows that while the recommendations reflect a sense of urgency, they cannot all be implemented at once. Indeed, throughout the book he stresses the importance of establishing priorities in seeking change and of working in a systematic way to make school reforms lasting ones. Like Goodlad, he sees both the problems of schools and their solutions in a historical context, which means that only long-term solutions have a real value.

Gathering material for *High School*, Boyer and his associates spent at least 20 days in each of the 15 public high schools they visited. Boyer's way of working their findings into his report has a touch of contrivance to it, probably because the names of the schools are false ones, the persons interviewed are faceless, and Boyer does not stay with any given school long enough to convey a genuine feel for it. But the findings produced by the visits are not diminished by the contrived quality of the way they are handled. (For a different approach to school visiting and reporting, see Sara Lawrence Lightfoot's *The Good High School: Portraits of Character and Culture* [Basic, 1983].)

Boyer's principal conclusion is that the schools today earn a mixed report card. They have many problems, but they are beginning to improve. Boyer finds evidence of improvement in the leveling off of standardized achievement test scores after years of decline, attempts in many schools to shape a core curriculum, the tightening of college admission standards, and a general revival of interest in improving schools.

The revival of interest in school improvement carries with it a liability. As Boyer shows, Americans have for years wanted high schools to accomplish too much. Reinforcing one of Ravitch's main themes, he points out that Arthur Bestor warned against excessive expectations more than 30 years ago: "The idea that the school must undertake to meet every need that some other agency is failing to meet, regardless of the suitability of the schoolroom to the task, is a preposterous delusion that in the end can wreck the educational system" (56-57).

Bestor was almost prophetic, Boyer says, for "high schools have accumulated purposes like barnacles on a weathered ship." Today's school, as a result, "is called upon to provide the services and transmit the values we used to expect from the community and the home and the church. And if they fail anywhere along the line, they are condemned" (57). The dilemma for today's school reformers, therefore, is to make the most of the public's interest in the schools without giving the impression that the schools can meet every want, serve every need, fulfill every dream.

Boyer addresses this dilemma by defining very specifically what high schools can and should do. While working on the definition, he and his colleagues engaged in an interesting exercise. They looked at the education laws of all fifty states, where they discovered "a numbing hodgepodge of rules and regulations." In California, he says, the education code is 3,700 pages long; in New York it is longer. Throughout the states, the education mandates are vague and wide-ranging; many of the requirements are a tip of the hat to special interest groups. At the local level, the mess is just as bad. Rarely does one find that high schools have a clear and vital sense of mission.

To help schools give clarity and vitality to their mission, Boyer proposes four goals and outlines possible ways to achieve them:

> First, the high school should help all students develop the capacity to think critically and communicate effectively through a mastery of language.
>
> Second, the high school should help all students learn about themselves, the human heritage, and the interdependent world in which they live through a core curriculum based upon consequential human experiences common to all people.
>
> Third, the high school should prepare all students for work and further education through a program of electives that develop individual aptitudes and interests.
>
> Fourth, the high school should help all students fulfill their social and civic obligations through school and community service. (66-67)

Substitute "community college" for "high school" in these goals, and you have a good mission statement for these institutions as well. That's why it is useful for community college leaders to pay attention to Boyer's elaboration on his proposed goals and his commentary on strategies for accomplishing them.

The first priority, Boyer says, is literacy—mastery of the English language. Beyond that, the curriculum must have a core. The core will be somewhat different in community colleges, of course, but it will have many compelling similarities to the one Boyer proposes for high schools. The high school core, in Boyer's terms, will provide for the development of cultural connections by means of shared symbols, cultivation of historical perspectives, consideration of membership in social and political groups and institutions, and the study of science and mathematics. Further, the core will pay attention to the impact of technology on modern life and to questions pertaining to health, the meaning of vocation, and problems associated with transitions from school to work and to learning beyond school. To be a curriculum, the schools' offerings must have a coherence not typically found in a mere collection of courses, which explains why a curriculum cannot be planned and implemented through the separate, uncoordinated efforts of all the persons responsible for its various aspects.

Among the other matters Boyer addresses that have their parallels in community colleges are the importance of renewing the teaching profession, the need to make more effective use of instructional time, and the desirability of strengthening connections between schools and the communities they serve.

* * * *

There is in *High School*, as well as in *The Troubled Crusade* and *A Place Called School*, an implicit agenda for colleges and universities that are prepared to capitalize on the revival of interest in education now sweeping through the

schools. For help in translating this agenda into a plan of action, Howard Bowen's *The State of the Nation and the Agenda for Higher Education* is an excellent starting point. Now in his 70s, Bowen has had a distinguished career as president of Grinnell College, the University of Iowa, and Claremont University Center, and he is now R. Stanton Avery Professor of Economics and Education at Claremont Graduate School. He is also an astute observer of higher education and American life who turns his observations into books and articles that command wide attention in the higher education community.

In some respects this book, which won the Association of American College's Frederic W. Ness Award in 1982, is an anachronism. While many today are bemoaning the existence of an over-educated workforce and pointing to the misery of men and women whose jobs demand less of them than they are prepared to offer, Bowen, like a voice from the past, looks for ways to extend the benefits of higher education to a larger share of the populace. While others worry about helping this week's students put bread on their tables next week, Bowen asks what kind of people we want our children and grandchildren to be and what kind of society we want them to live in. While others fret over the problems of keeping colleges and universities afloat, Bowen asks what higher education can do to help nurture people of the kind we hope for and to help create the kind of society we want for them. At times, in hearing Bowen one can hear what almost sounds like the voice of a true idealist in the pre-turmoil sixties.

The first part of the book, on the state of the nation, is predictably bland (or should I say blandly predictable?). Levels of educational attainment are rising, he reports, but are not yet what they should be, and a substantial proportion of the American population has serious learning disabilities. Yet the nation is generally making economic progress: the population is growing and changing in ways that are not all bad; the underlying trend of production and productivity, allowing for cyclical changes, has been strongly and persistently upward since 1950; contrary to widespread opinion, the proportion of the GNP devoted to government has not expanded drastically. At the same time, however, the composition of the labor force has changed in ways that have major implications for the family and the welfare of children; the standard of living has risen, but with it have come reduced consumer services, lower quality and durability of products, harmful ingredients, and increased risk of accidents; progress toward conservation of resources and abatement of pollution have been sluggish, and the widespread hope that technology will make it possible to maintain growth while conserving resources and improving the environment will, in the end, prove to be a vain one; beginning around 1970, the three-decade trend toward more equitable distribution of income leveled off and some backsliding has occurred.

Social progress has been similarly mixed. Social welfare expenditures, Bowen believes, have reduced poverty, enhanced personal security, improved health, opened up opportunity, increased justice, and contributed to human dignity. But the family is in trouble, drug and alcohol addiction pose formidable problems, and the growth of criminal activity is disturbing. There is mixed progress, too, in communications, voting, education, the fine arts, and science and technology. The rise of submerged groups, the widening of personal freedom, the strengthening of human rights, and the protection of workers and consumers have brought far-reaching changes to American life, and despite occasional reversals and episodes of backlash, the changes have worked their way permanently, but with fragility, into the social fabric. At the same time, large numbers of people today have become "preoccupied with their own interests, pleasures, and comforts, and are inclined to shirk their responsibilities as citizens, family members, and workers" (48). In the long run, those in the latter category cannot prevail, at least if higher education does its part—a conviction that inspires Bowen to propose an agenda for colleges and universities.

Those who know all this can skip the first half of the book. That will leave more time for the second half, which merits greater attention anyway. For those interested in reassessing the purpose and character of community colleges, this question on page 82 is a good starting point:

> Does higher education have the freedom and the nerve to influence human beings according to its own inner standards and values? Or must it merely adjust to the demands of the economy and polity by serving as a purveyor of compliant workers to fit the needs of the labor force, of self-indulgent consumers to fit the prevailing styles of life so skillfully portrayed by Madison Avenue, and of obedient citizens to become pillars of the prevailing political establishment?

Exploring possible answers, Bowen points to history to show how the family, the church, the school, and the college were regarded as responsible institutions with "an authentic tradition, a humane outlook on life, and keen moral sensibility." Differences existed, but they were to be reconciled through the power of tradition, divine revelation, and scholarly inquiry. All the institutions were protected in various ways, the college by autonomy through the constitutional right of free speech and the tradition of academic freedom, reinforced by a governance system in which lay boards were buffers between the colleges and their financial supporters.

The independent influence of colleges and universities, Bowen says, derives in part from their teaching and research and is shaped by ideals that are mostly radical. Insofar as they are practiced, they are disturbing to such enemies of change as superstition, prejudice, provincialism, ignorance, and discrimination. The ideals of higher education are not intended to buttress the status quo by

merely socializing its students. Although opposed to violence, these ideals are likely, if communicated to intelligent and energetic people, to produce social change. Thus, in their tradition, colleges were insistent that liberal learning and concern for values enjoy a central place. If those in their charge are to produce social change, the change should be in the right direction.

But what if students want only a practical, vocation-oriented education? This is a very important question for community colleges, and Bowen's answer is a source of inspiration for those who would change them.

> The answer is that people are not qualified to make good judgments about education until after they themselves have been educated. The duty of educators is not to respond supinely to the demands of government or of the marketplace but rather to provide education that people would have chosen had they been educated or would have preferred in retrospect after they had been educated . . . The duty of higher education is not to cater to the values that partially educated people bring to colleges but rather to raise the level or quality of these values. The educator is a professional who is entrusted by society to provide appropriate content and method to the end that students will ultimately become well-educated persons. (94)

What follows this answer is an impassioned argument and a well-reasoned case for liberal education, or what Bowen calls personal education, to go with the practical education that colleges and universities must also provide.

The goal, of course, is a well-educated person. But what does this mean? Some would say it means possession of a baccalaureate degree; others would define it in terms of a course of study leading to this end; still others would describe a well-educated person in terms of qualities and characteristics, as John Cardinal Newman did in a lengthy quotation Bowen works into his argument; and yet others would cast it "in terms of the depth of education that a specified proportion of the population could be expected to master." Bowen's discussion of the first three definitions is clear and insightful, of the fourth rambling and lofty. The first three are apparently all wrapped up in the fourth, and the fourth one, which deals with the development of a genuinely educated citizen, is the one that is most important to Bowen.

What needs to be done to accomplish the goal of producing educated persons? Here Bowen is both more and less specific: more specific in the sense that there must be education for values, education that aims to reach all youth and to address their needs—those the youth perceive as well as those they do not — and education for international reconciliation; less specific in the sense that detailed plans for providing education with these concerns are skimpily outlined.

But that is no matter. The agenda is there. It remains to be fleshed out by those who spend their time in college classrooms, administrative offices, and board rooms. The implicit agendas provided in the first three books treated in this essay are available to provide help in this essential undertaking.

* * * *

That the judgments and ideas of these four books lend themselves so readily to the specific applications I have been making to the state of community colleges today attests to their comprehensiveness of vision as well as their value for anyone seriously committed to the renewal of these institutions. But to grant the possibility of making applications is not to dispel doubts or answer reservations about the specific ones I have made. I anticipate, for example, that some may say that the authors of these books and this essay have not faced up to the commonly-asked question John Goodlad cites when he wonders whether the nation really espouses the ideals so often expressed in its statements of educational goals: "If more schooling does not assure a better job, what good is it?" An astute observation by Goodlad himself provides the basis for an answer:

> A major issue . . . is whether the school has now come to that critical juncture in the twentieth century experienced by the household in the nineteenth. In the face of rapid industrialization, the family quickly became outmoded in preparing the young for jobs. In the current era of automation and rapid technological advancement, the school perhaps has passed its period of greatest effectiveness in providing job preparation, job placement, and subsequent vocational mobility for its students. (149)

The logical inference, of course, is that the critical task for schools and colleges is to educate students broadly, equipping them with knowledge and skills that will be required to adapt to changing demands in the workplace. A good liberal education may be the best vocational education in the long run, and with it come benefits contributing to knowledgeable living and, presumably, informed citizenship.

Some may argue that the writers of these books and this essay have underestimated the magnitude of the obstacles standing in the way of providing students with the kind of education they need, that we do not have, for example, a sense of what it is like to teach young men and women reared before a television set. In my 26 years of teaching—encompassing all but the first nine years of the period treated by Diane Ravitch in *The Troubled Crusade*, I taught a good many persons who were disabled by television's effects. I know how difficult it is to reach them, as, no doubt, do the authors of the books. But there is no point in dwelling on these difficulties here, for that has been done elsewhere, as in Neil Postman's *Teaching as a Conserving Activity* (Delacorte, 1979). His

guidance regarding sensible ways to attack the problems television poses for teachers and parents implicitly parallels the recommendations of Goodlad and Boyer.

Some may contend that the liberal values espoused by Bowen are out of date, that they were the wave of the sixties. But just because efforts to implement them went astray in the sixties, as Alan Matusow shows quite convincingly they did in his *The Unraveling of America. A History of Liberalism in the 1960s* (Harper and Row, 1984), does not mean that the values themselves are discredited or not worth pursuing through the means urged here. Moreover, those with a historical sense are confident, or at least hopeful, that the time for these values will come again.

Some may charge that it is an insult to suggest that community colleges can learn from studies of the schools. On the contrary, it is a compliment, particularly when it carries with it the assertion that these leaders can help their compatriots in their common struggles.

And some may dismiss this essay as being out of touch with community colleges, claiming that I don't understand the community college philosophy, that community colleges are already where I would like for them to be, doing what I would like for them to do. I can only say that I wish someone would prove such critics to be right. Until I am so persuaded, I must continue to urge community college leaders to seize the moment, to make the most of the opportunity to recreate their institutions, making them all that they can and should be. The rich historical perspective that Diane Ravitch constructs, the recommendations that flow from the studies of John Goodlad and Ernest Boyer, and the agenda set by Howard Bowen, give them what they need to embark on a new beginning at an age when maturity has long since set in.

Note: The judgments and viewpoints expressed in this article are the writer's and do not represent an official position or authorized statement on behalf of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

College Teaching and the Question of Commitment

Robert R. Lawrence

A Clerk ther was of Oxenford also,
That un-to logik hadde longe y-go.
As lene was his hors as is a rake,
And he nas nat right fat, I under take;
But loked holwe, and therto soberly.
Ful thredbar was his overest courtepy;
For he had geten him yet no benefyce,
Ne was so worldly for to have offyce.
For him was lever have at his beddes head
Twenty bokes, clad in blak or reed,
Of Aristotle and his philosophye,
Than robes riche, or fithele, or gay sautrye.
But al that he mighte of his freendes hente,
On bokes and on lerninge he it spente,
And bisily gan for the soules preye
Of hem that yaf him wher-with to scoleye
Of studie took he most cure and most hede.
Noght o word spak he more than was nede,
And that was seyd in forme and reverence,
And short and quick, and full of hy sentence,
Souninge in moral vertu was his speche,
And gladly wolde he lerne, and gladly teche.

—*Chaucer*
"Prologue" to *The Canterbury Tales*
(Skeat edition)

The Aims of College Teaching by Kenneth E. Eble. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1983. 177 + *xviii pp.*, *$15.95.*

On Teaching and Learning in College by Paul L. Dressel and Dora Marcus. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1982. 241 + *xxvii pp.*, *$16.95.*

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Certain books I have read have reassured me that to speak of myself as a *teacher* is at once to declare my calling in life and to describe my salaried career. One was Gilbert Highet's *The Art of Teaching*, a book I found a little too idealistic as a college senior. Later I came to realize that Highet meant and lived those seemingly idealistic words as a Columbia University professor. Another such book, a gift from a friend who has remained a friend for most of my teaching career, is G. B. Harrison's *Profession of English*. This Shakespeare scholar states: "In whatever he teaches — even in Freshman Composition — the ultimate end of the humanist is to reveal to his students . . . surface, subsoil, depth . . . Human studies are not only valuable but essential for right and intelligent living . . ." Such a teacher, says Harrison, "perceives, stores, connects." Publishing is not necessary, he adds in a quaintly humorous fashion (169-70).

My favorite book in this connection is Frederick Crews's *Out of My System*. On the surface it is a defense of his use of Freudian insights as a literary critic; the subsoil is the political-social turmoil of a Berkeley professor committed to teaching the humanities and being a moral person. Much less pleasant reading is Richard Ohmann's *English in America*. It served me well in 1976, however, as I moved into community college teaching after a decade of graduate study and a junior instructorship in a liberal arts college. Ohmann concludes:

> I have spent a lot of time in this book debunking, uncovering "real" motives and causes, rejecting our orthodox professional beliefs as dangerous and self-serving myths. And indeed I do think that the professional field in which I have worked for twenty years has been wrapped in delusions, a great muddle at the heart of its confidence and prosperity. (335)

What Ohmann debunks is the elitism of university English departments. An egalitarian attitude, he believes, is necessary in an open-admissions college, to teach English or the humanities in general as service courses, to be prepared to explain one's calling in terms of its civic, practical, and moral ends.

But those of us who have survived graduate school in the humanities — and some of you, like me, departments of higher and adult education as well — enjoy, on occasion, a truly highbrow book. *The Living Principle: English as a Discipline of Thought*, by F. R. Leavis, is such a book. He ends the first essay saying, "Where there is an educated public the living principle will be a living presence and have some influence" (69). As teachers in the humanities especially, but as teachers in community colleges in general, we are committed to making this living principle a living presence to our students and to sustaining its influence.

* * * *

It is the general purpose of this essay to review several books on teaching that I have found valuable reading in the twenty years since I completed my B. A.

and teacher training. It is the specific purpose of this essay to review *The Aims of College Teaching* by Kenneth E. Eble, and *On Teaching and Learning in College* by Paul L. Dressel and Dora Marcus.

Eble's earlier book, *The Craft of Teaching* (along with Ohmann's book), was seminal in my decision to return to teaching from a technical editing job. I read it in the summer of 1977 while teaching "Writing for Business and Industry" in a community college. Eble buoyed my teaching that summer. The general philosophy of both Eble books is the same, but the recent one, *Aims*, is more negative in tone, as the title of Chapter 7, "Seven Deadly Sins of Teaching," demonstrates. The sins are Arrogance, Dullness, Rigidity, Insensitivity, Vanity, Self-Indulgence, and Hypocrisy. "Pride is clearly operative in most of these; Sloth like Lust and Anger . . . [belong] more appropriately among mankind's general sins." Eble's examples are familiar ones: "a faint distaste for what one is doing," "a boorishness of manner or studied seediness of dress," "the savage and sarcastic comments on papers" (103-104). We have all been victims of such faculty behavior, and if we are not careful, will make our students victims, especially if we are teaching in a community college only because there were no openings in the college or university where we might prefer to teach. Disappointment and fear are often covered up by arrogance. Eble, being an English professor, uses two literary works to exemplify dullness: Dickens' *Hard Times* (in the person of Mr. McChoakumchild) and Pope's Duncaid. (The poem itself, he notes, is dull.)

Rigidity, as Arrogance and Dullness, develops from a need to discipline students, without knowing how to encourage just enough thinking to make a particular course interesting. Insensitivity has no place in the community college; developmental and non-traditional students need caring instructors, or the open door becomes a revolving door. A student may begin with just one class, usually math or English, or maybe a night class in psychology or data-processing; that one class, i.e., teacher, may determine for the student whether to drop out or start a new career, as a student.

"Vanity, Self-Indulgence, and Hypocrisy are a closely related trio of sins so much a part of human makeup as to give little hope of correction. Vanity is but a lesser form of Pride . . . we would not be human without it . . .; we have all of our other sins because of it" (113). Some people leave the profession because they cannot get the right kind of peer praise; students, on the other hand, do not know enough to praise faculty properly. Colleagues' praise, if any, refers to scholarship and research. Those who stay in the classroom enjoy being their own bosses, using low salaries as an excuse to work as little as possible; they have tenure and "no great ardor" for either publishing or teaching. A casual book review now and then will do.

Self-indulgence is shown by those who construct courses and curricula to fit their individual interests alone, or who dismiss classes "while the professor is responding to some higher call off campus . . . for the students more a source of relief than complaint" (116). It is shown as well by the professor who intentionally structures a course so his work is limited to meeting his classes and grading mid-term and final exams. As an example of Hypocrisy Eble uses varsity sports, whose very existence, he believes, is not "compatible with even minimal standard of honest academic work" (117).

At both ends of a long middle on the negatives of college teaching, Eble elaborates on the positive aspects. He has spent 20 of his 30 teaching years "closely connected with improving college teaching." The individual professor, he stresses, must be committed to some accomplishment other than finishing the textbook; for example, the humanities professor should be committed to teaching—especially to science and technology majors—patterns and relationships (what Dressel and Marcus call "complex inter-relationships") as they appear in dance, music, poetry, and prose fiction. The deep thought processes that are needed for writing critiques carry over into writing engineering specifications, as well as empowering the adult who becomes an amateur or constant spectator of one of the performing arts. I know an engineer who is a ballet buff, a microbiologist who collects Mozart LPs, and a kindergarten teacher who is plowing through the complete Henry James.

Miller and Prince *(The Future of Student Affairs, 1977)* indict every faculty member who does not see his/her job as the need to influence, through the curriculum, every individual student as that student makes life-long career plans based upon undergraduate and graduate majors. Further, off-the-cuff comments by a faculty member in lecture and in conference help frame a student's philosophy of life. It is frightening sometimes to learn several years later how a casual comment or an indulged mood has influenced a student. Miller and Prince explain:

> The institution's commitment to student development is directly proportional to the number of these collaborative links between the student affairs staff and the faculty. Although these two groups have cooperated on some programs on most campuses, full collaboration is generally the exception rather than the rule. To some extent, institutional programs have been dividing the students into parts and competing for control. This separation and competition must be rejected by any college that truly wishes to serve the whole student. (155)

The wrong approach to teaching — if there is a right and wrong approach — will more likely be made by college professors than any other group of faculty.

"Higher educators" have tended to think exclusively in terms of their disciplines: "I teach electrical engineering," or "I teach computer science," or "I teach history." This is in sharp contrast to the New England prep-school instructor who said, "I teach boys." Eble makes it clear that we should teach individual students—not subjects. There is perhaps a pun here: our pupils are not *subjects*, but *citizens*. Eble states that one of the aims of higher education is teaching civic responsibility.

In the mid-1960s, when I began teaching, I was at a liberal arts college in one of the mid-Atlantic states. as a teacher of freshman composition, I was required to have at least three 20-minute conferences a semester with each pupil. Once the rhythm began, many students felt free to come to my office for general as well as specific conferences. One of my former students (who has since become an MD) came to see me at the end of his senior year to tell me, "You were the only instructor who spoke to me in my freshman year." He meant that lectures and discussion in the classroom did not count — the chats in the office and in the student sandwich shop were what made him feel his instructors recognized him as an individual human being. We all too often forget the pupil outside of the classroom, or worse yet, expect dorm counsellors and the deans of students to handle all out-of-class matters.

Unlike the teacher preparing for elementary and secondary teaching, the college teacher probably has no teacher training—except informal sessions he may have had as a graduate teaching assistant with other teaching assistants and perhaps one or two senior professors. Eble notes that most Ph.D. programs provide for teaching assistants, laboratory assistants, and funded research assistants; teaching assistants are perceived to be at the bottom of that list in both the students' and the professors' thinking. Eble, of course, thinks just the opposite; doctoral programs should provide true seminars where teaching methods and tactics are discussed. How to construct tests is a constant problem; having an older respected professor analyze a rough draft and proofread a final copy of a test is one of his good suggestions. The student who plans to be a student-personnel worker or an administrator should certainly read Eble's books (he has written several, including one on administrators). The Ph.D. candidate who plans to be a research professor should read Miller and Prince, *The Future of Student Affairs*. Unfortunately, as Eble points out, the professional in higher education is likely never to enter the classroom, and the research professor is likely never to think of "talking to," let alone counselling, a student. In his earlier *The Craft of Teaching* (1976), Eble refers to such matters as the "Grubby Stuff and Dirty Work."

Teaching as we have known it in the West since the rise of the universities in the Middle Ages, and since the outgrowth of the lower school from cathedral and choir schools, has always assumed a teacher and numerous students. Such

teaching is not that of Socrates or of the Eastern thinkers, be they Christian, Zen Buddhist, or Taoist. The concept of a master and his two or three disciples is not the way of the West. The monks of Athos laugh at the western church's seminaries and large novice classes. The lawyer learns on the job after he has his J.D.; the engineer learns on the job after his B.S. (and before his P.E.). The Ph.D. candidate—if he is lucky—learns from close association with his advisor. We need tutor-mentors to help us really learn in the law office, in the engineering office, and in the classroom.

But the way of the West is first to present *facts* (again Mr. McChoakumchild in Dickens's *Hard Times*). The degree is needed first: the lectures, seminars, textbooks, examinations. But how to teach the facts is largely up to the young Ph.D. feeling very alone in a classroom full of pupils. With the aid of teaching improvement programs (available in many community colleges) and a close reading of Eble's works, whether one is a novice or not, we might do a better job. We might even become disciples of master teachers with whom, over a period of years, we can mutually learn.

In his chapter, "Craft, Science, or Art?" Eble defends his claim in an earlier book that college teaching is a craft:

> First of all, craft is associated with slyness: crafty as a fox. Who is to deny that foxes are good teachers of chickens and owners of henhouses? A teacher's effectiveness, if we would but admit it, is composed of the tricks of the trade, devices used spontaneously and regularly to attract and hold attention, specific devices connected with helping students master particular concepts or skills. One such device is that skill of questioning by which a student's learning is drawn out or *educed*, as the word *educate* still incorporates. . . . After we have gained that attention, then the trick is to provoke the learner to practice the acquiring of a skill or to search out the answers to questions or to imitate the acts of mind and muscle that have been set forth. (55)

And he adds, unhappily:

> Watching several cycles of students over thirty years, I find most disturbing those who have been with us since the mid seventies who, perhaps in reaction to the questioning sixties, want only to be told what they should learn and how and even to what end. (57)

The craftiness here is to tell them what to learn and how, while at the same time "not [letting] students be simply sponges, but . . . fool, deceive, trick [them into finding] out for themselves . . . the complexity of the world" and the world's "proclivity for hiding and deceiving." Such a use of craft is associated with games and play. While this is not a reference to Dewey and making school fun, we need

to share with our students the need to understand that logic, math, and indeed most of the professions and arts, are simply play, and that learning itself is "the highest form of play." Eble says that the job of teaching is the fun we have working. Dressel and Marcus also discuss this matter of play extensively in their book.

In the chapter on "The Joys of Teaching," Eble explains these joys through an extended analogy with sex. Here is one part of that analogy:

> Women understand this matter of talk and love better than men; that may account, in part, for women's greater receptivity to learning about teaching. As a sexual partner, it is the male who has the greatest difficulty in reaching the kind of communicating that the woman desires. Why? Perhaps because sex for the male is so much a pure physical release, an assertion of power, something apart from a communion of spirit that begins in talk and ends in silent rapture. So, the bad lecturer is not so much engaging some parts of the feeling and thinking apparatus of students as releasing his own stored-up knowledge and asserting the powe rthat knowledge has given him. (40)

Another sample describes some of my favorite college professors (how I loved them, compulsively writing down every word they said):

> A manifest love of subject is often the key to the mystery of how bad teachers can still affect some students greatly. Despite a curmudgeonly manner or lack of or wanton disregard for ordinary teaching skills, the professor conveys how deeply he is engaged in his subject matter, and for some, what it is like to have and sustain that kind of love. (42)

While I was leading a session on teaching philosophy in community colleges (CCHA, Orlando, 1983), one professor was astounded that most of my students would take only *one* philosophy class while in college, especially if they are seeking a two-year technology degree. It is precisely because most of my students take only one philosophy class that I direct class discussions (not test questions, I must emphasize) to the practical and citizenship aspects of metaphysical and logical thinking. I was therefore pleased to read in chapter 9, "Teaching's Highest Aims," that Eble ranks "Toward Civic Responsibility" as one of four aims of higher education. Democracy is based on a thinking citizenry, and a post-industrial society is based on skilled and broadly knowledgeable citizenry. The other three aims Eble discusses are "Practical Ends," "Cultural Ends," and "Moral Responsibility." Note that all of these are basic to the role of the humanities in the community college, and that none of them are specific bodies of knowledge, i.e., disciplines, courses, skills, majors.

While I don't think the humanities have a corner on morals or culture, I do think that literature, art, music, and philosophy provide an opportunity for students to express their opinions while learning the practical skills of rhetoric and communication. Eble bases this chapter on one of his favorite books, Alfred North Whitehead's *The Aims of Education*; together Eble and Whitehead provide the college professor with massive support.

Read Eble's *Aims* by all means, but be prepared to do some real soul searching; he is much harder on you than either your division chair or your therapist.

* * * *

In my own life most of my teachers, K-12, were personally significant. One high school English teacher became my mentor. Hanging over my typewriter today is the triple exposure that a fellow undergraduate, an art major, took of my favorite undergraduate professor over 20 years ago.

Therefore, I was sad when Dressel said in *On Teaching and Learning in College* that not one of his K-12 teachers left a positive impact (although he could name all of them) and one left a very negative impact, a teacher "utilizing procedures originally developed to expedite understanding" in a manner that "routinized education" (ix). Only two of his undergraduate teachers stimulated Dressel's interests and learning, whereas most of mine did. Dressel remembers one professor because of a special teaching technique, the other for a concept taught. Both teachers have had life-long influence. The same was true for him in graduate school; two professors made a major impact. But the seminal statement Dressel makes is:

> I would urge those concerned with improving their teaching to engage in the same kind of critical reflection [as Dressel on his K-graduate school experience] and then go on to review the impact of their own classroom teaching practices, assignments, and evaluations on students. One conviction that may emerge is that the individual teacher is far less important in a student's development than many teachers are inclined to think. (xi)

Perhaps — certainly for self-motivated, traditional students.

One of the best courses that I took in graduate school was Philip Phenix's "Ways of Knowing." I was pleased, therefore, to see so much attention given by Dressel and Marcus to his ideas. The point they make regarding philosophy as an undergraduate discipline epitomizes their overall argument that teaching and learning, especially in general and undergraduate education, is transdisciplinary: "Philosophy differs from other disciplines largely because it employs a comprehensive, synoptic, and integrative approach to problems of nature and man" (154).

Chapters 5 through 9 deal with this concept, from the point of view that "the primary role of education is humanizing" the student. The "disciplines are not so distinctive as they sometimes seem," since the "disciplines are artifacts of man's search for meaning." It is the college teacher's role to demonstrate clearly to and for students the "complex interrelationships" among the disciplines. This curriculum theory is especially important for those community college professors whose obligations are general education and developmental education. The chapter titles suggest the transdisciplinary theory:

Rethinking the Role of the Disciplines
Defining Characteristics of the Disciplines
Teaching Within the Disciplines
Learning Through Transdisciplinary Teaching
Adapting Courses and Programs to a Transdisciplinary Context

The ideas embodied in these topics are also expressed in Eble's chapter, "The Joys of Teaching," and in Crews's "Student Protest and Academic Distance." Whitehead, Highet, and Harrison expressed them in now decades-old idiom, and Chaucer in Middle English. We should share our enjoyment of the classics, mythology, Shakespeare, Middle English, etymology, and the not so-subtle opinion of Chaucer as to what a teacher (clerk) should be. A great deal of interdisciplinary matter is involved in such teaching.

The same is true of composition teaching. Not only should we teach etymology, rhetoric, and grammar, but if we lead our students to writing about literature from writing about self, community, career, the other, then we must exhibit a whole range of interdisciplinary knowledge and have some grounding in counselling and psychology. Ohmann laments that "English" as a discipline consists of the poorly soldered (note I did *not* say welded) together sub-disciplines of literary study and composition-rhetoric.

It is better, I say with Dressel and Marcus, to see the continuity of composition, rhetoric, linguistics, and literature. Leavis's *Living Principle* certainly illustrates the transdisciplinary relationships within the English discipline; the Preface alone cites Wittgenstein, T. S. Eliot, and D. H. Lawrence. Works like those by Crews and Leavis show in addition the joy they have obtained from such learning and teaching. "Both learning and teaching must be enjoyable if they are to have both immediate and long-term impact on those who learn and on those who stimulate that learning" (201).

Dressel, in his personal Preface, states that undergraduate professors should not be researchers. They should devote their out-of-class time to extensive reading, synthesizing course material from scholarship and recent developments so as to revise syllabi and curricula — all with the aim of stimulating students. "Teaching, well done, is tremendously time-consuming

Researchers will usually, and quite understandably, give inadequate time to teaching and to evaluating student work." Therefore the typical researcher should limit his teaching time to graduate and doctoral students (xiii). Harrison and Eble agree.

To Dressel and Marcus the undergraduate professor should be primarily a *teacher*. This mandate is particularly strong for the community college professor. Further, the undergraduate professor should teach not a discipline in depth, but the complex interrelationships of the disciplines. The community college professor should be especially concerned with these interrelationships.

Because the humanities today are to a large extent a series of "service courses" for career programs on the associate and baccalaureate levels, we ought to teach across the disciplines, be they formal programs or individual courses in our own classrooms. That should not be difficult for humanities personnel. As Leavis and Crews suggest, we are by nature "interdisciplinary" as we deal with religion, philosophy, psychology, sociology, history, and geography in literature, art, music, rhetoric, and logic courses. Our very vocabulary vibrates with the varieties of the ways of knowing. The *joy*, the *craft*, of teaching is to demonstrate the complex interrelationships of reasoning and empirical facts—so that we can use our knowledge to practical and artistic ends.

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REPORT

New Programs at NEH

Susan Resneck Parr

A little over a year ago, the Division of Education Programs of the National Endowment for the Humanities created a new set of grant programs designed to be more responsive to the needs of the American educational system in the 1980s. One of these programs, the Central Disciplines in Undergraduate Education Programs, is intended to strengthen the teaching and learning of the humanities at the undergraduate level and should be of special interest to readers of these pages.

This new program—which provides support to colleges and universities to improve introductory courses, to promote excellence in a department or an interdisciplinary program, and to foster coherence throughout an institution—has been extremely well-received, generating a large number of high-quality applications. An additional indication that the new programs are working in ways the Division had hoped is that two-year colleges have competed with roughly the same success rate as have four-year colleges and universities.

Even so, the number of applications from two-year institutions has been disappointingly low. It is in the hope of countering that circumstance that I am writing here. Specifically, I would like to describe a number of the ways in which the new Central Disciplines Program will benefit community colleges and also to suggest how institutions might best proceed as they prepare applications for Endowment support.

Let me first establish the context for the new programs. Previously, the Division's primary emphasis was curricular development. To gain Endowment support for undergraduate education, an institution could seek funding for a consultant to help design a new course or series of courses, for a program to initiate those courses to see if they worked, or for a larger project that would give those courses and comparable courses a place in the curriculum. Frequently, institutions applied for and were given grants in that sequence.

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A second and equally significant characteristic of the earlier projects is that many of them were meant to be experiments. The idea was that faculty members would try out new courses and programs that were at the periphery of an institution's curriculum with the hope that if they were successful, they would become part of the regular structure.

When Richard Ekman came to the Endowment in 1982 as Director of the Division of Education, after four years as an academic vice president and after an earlier position in the Division, he and the staff reviewed what had happened to such grants. What they learned was that even though the majority of institutions involved found the grants to have been successful, and even though almost all of the projects had been undertaken with the belief that their impact would be long-term, it appeared that as few as half of the projects genuinely brought the desired change. Specifically, many of these activities lasted only as long as NEH funding did. Others were abandoned within a few years, either because they were deemed too costly to sustain on institutional funds or because they were eventually seen as being merely the product of short-term fads.

Ekman therefore embarked on a major effort to talk with faculty members and administrators across the country about how the Endowment might best help them address their needs and support their efforts to strengthen the teaching and learning of the humanities. The results of those conversations are not surprising. From all types of institutions at all educational levels, the litany of concerns was the same:

1) Students were unable to read, write or think clearly, logically and critically;

2) Students were present-minded;

3) Students were not knowledgeable either about Western civilization or non-Western civilizations; and

4) Students were vocationally-oriented.

The vast majority of those consulted also agreed that course development was not the only way to strengthen the teaching and the learning of the humanities, but that the Endowment's support for faculty development (including sabbaticals and summer stipends), visiting scholars, library acquisitions, consultants, student scholarships, and travel would be extremely beneficial.

Out of those discussions, the new guidelines emerged. Their aim is clear: that students be led to study in a rigorous way the significant texts, the central ideas, and the methodologies of the disciplines of the humanities; that institutions make efforts to increase the amount of study required in the

humanities for all their students; and that the quality of the material studied be improved. At the same time, the Endowment has become less prescriptive than before about the ways to achieve those goals, requiring only that institutions seek funding for projects that are firmly grounded in the institution's own structures and that are designed to secure for the humanities a central role in undergraduate education.

One of the new programs, *Improving Introductory Courses*, is especially appropriate for two-year colleges. Given that 87% of all credit hours taken in the humanities at all colleges and universities in the nation are at the freshman and sophomore level, and that 40% of these hours are taken at two-year colleges, this program is especially important. Designed to make lower-division education in the humanities more effective within a major or as part of a general education program, grants in this category have typically ranged from $15,000 to $70,000.

But what is most significant is that grant funds can be used for a wide array of activities. For example, in institutions where heavy teaching loads are the norm, the Endowment can support faculty-development projects designed to increase a faculty member's expertise in the areas he or she teaches. That support might take the form of enabling a faculty member to take courses or work on an independent study project with a senior scholar from another institution. Endowment support might also allow a community college to bring to its campus visiting scholars to conduct workshops or more extended summer institutes for its faculty. Support is also available for consultants, visiting professors, sabbaticals, and library acquisitions that are part of a cogent plan to improve lower-division offerings.

Within the category Improving Introductory Courses, the Endowment has recently developed a new initiative designed to foster cooperation between libraries and humanities departments for the purpose of preparing students to use resources in the humanities. Projects within this initiative should not be limited to teaching students simply how to locate resources but rather how to analyze them and incorporate them into the study of the humanities.

One cautionary note is in order in regard to introductory courses: the Endowment does not support projects designed exclusively to teach basic skills (other than in foreign language instruction). There are several reasons for this stance, but perhaps the most pertinent is that the Endowment has already supported the development of a great many successful models for teaching writing and critical thinking, models which can be adapted by an institution at little or no cost. In addition, because such skills are prequisites for college-level work, Endowment reviewers tend to believe that the teaching of academic skills should be part of an institution's normal responsibilities. On the other hand, I want to stress that reviewers always look for evidence that a project will require

students to think critically and write clearly about the substance of the humanities.

The second category within Central Disciplines Programs, *Promoting Excellence in a Field*, should also be of interest to faculty members and administrators in two-year colleges. This category is designed to enable established programs within an institution to achieve excellence and raise standards. Grants in this category are not limited to single disciplines. Rather, interdisciplinary programs—such as those in the history of ideas—are eligible if they are an established part of the curriculum. Here, again, grant funds can be used for a wide range of activities, if they have one or more of the following goals: to aid faculty members in becoming more conversant with the texts, scholarship, and methodologies within their own field; to make courses more rigorous and programs or majors more coherent; to improve the teaching effectiveness of the faculty; and to facilitate faculty participation in professional activities.

The final category, *Fostering Coherence Throughout an Institution*, is designed to help further efforts of institutions that have made a commitment to strengthening all fields of the humanities and securing for them a central place in the curriculum. Here, support is available to institutions which have developed a comprehensive plan based on a full evaluation of their total program in the humanities.

For example, in the Coherence category, the Endowment might support the efforts of a two-year college to create a strong core curriculum in the humanities for its associate-degree students. In such a case, an institution might seek Endowment help to bring to the campus senior faculty from outside the institution who could contribute to the design of the program. Or, if the program has already been created, the Endowment might be asked to support faculty development activities that would allow the institution's faculty to teach the core courses more effectively. The institution could also seek Endowment support for library acquisitions related to the core and even for the hiring of new faculty members in key areas of the humanities as long as the institution made a commitment to make those positions permanent once the grant period had ended.

It has, I should emphasize, been the experience of the Division staff that the most successful Coherence applications are those which have benefited from the involvement of both faculty members in the humanities and senior administrative officials in the planning and development of the projects. Indeed, it is extremely unlikely that applications in the coherence area would be competitive unless proposals reflected in direct ways the active participation of faculty members and top administrators.

It is also possible for institutions to seek a conjoined Fostering Coherence Throughout an Institution grant and a Challenge grant. Since such applications

are more complex than normal applications, it would be advisable for institutions considering this possibility to contact staff members in each of these programs at the initial stages of planning. In addition, support is available through the Division's *Exemplary Projects for Undergraduate and Graduate Education* for collaborative efforts between colleges and other institutions. For example, if graduates of a particular community college often transfer to a nearby state university, the Endowment could support a collaborative effort on the part of the two institutions to make their courses more compatible and to allow joint faculty-development activities.

If an institution is considering seeking support in any of the programs described above, it is best to send to the appropriate program officer a three-to-five page prospectus that outlines the institution's goals and the activities for which it plans to seek support. The Endowment staff can then review the prospectus and advise the institution about the eligibility and the probable competitiveness of the proposed activities. The staff can also suggest the sort of supporting materials a full proposal would need. Members of the Division of Education Programs staff are available as well to review and make suggestions about a draft of a full proposal as long as the draft is submitted at least six weeks prior to the application deadline. (The next deadlines for Central Disciplines applications are April 1, 1984 and October 1, 1984.) It is of course appropriate to call a member of the program staff to discuss a potential proposal.

The Endowment staff and its reviewers—who themselves frequently are faculty members and administrators from community colleges as well as from other sectors of higher education—are aware that the heavy teaching responsibilities of faculty members in two-year institutions often discourage them from seeking external support. The new guidelines and the availability of the staff to work with applicants are designed to make the application process less cumbersome, less bureaucratic, and more responsive to the diverse needs of various institutions.

I would encourage those of you who are making efforts to strengthen the teaching and learning of the humanities at your institution to contact a member of the staff to discuss your plans. For your convenience, the Division of Education Program staff, complete with phone numbers, is listed below. The Division would also welcome any suggestions about other possible areas of funding by which the Endowment could provide support to community colleges in their educational efforts.

Staff Members of the Division of Education Programs

Staff members are listed here according to the grant programs with which they are principally affiliated. Every member of the staff is familiar with the Division's programs, however, and potential applicants may contact any staff member and be assured that their inquiries will be routed promptly to the most appropriate program.

Director	*Richard Ekman*	*(202) 786-0373*
Deputy Director	*Myron Marty*	*(202) 786-0373*
Central Disciplines in Undergraduate Education		
Assistant Director	*Susan Resneck Parr*	*(202) 786-0380*
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John Strassburger		*(202) 786-0384*
Charles Meyers		*(202) 786-0384*
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Humanities Programs for Nontraditional Learners		
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The address is: Division of Education Programs, Room 302
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1100 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
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